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ABSTRACT

This third volume by the Centre for Language in Education (CLE) is intended to bring together a number of concerns currently under review at the Centre. Articles in this issue include: "Managing Open Learning" (Vicky Wright); "Self-Assessment of Foreign Language Skills: Does It Work?" (George Blue); "Language Awareness and Language Development: Can We Trace Links?" (Janet Hooper, Rosamond Mitchell and Christopher Brumfit); "Learners' Accounts of Their Errors in a Foreign Language: An Exploratory Study" (Francine Chambers); "Crocodile Dundee Meets His Match in Urdu: Brixton Primary School Children Shape a Multilingual Culture" (Charmian Kenner); "Literacy, Values, and Non-Literary Texts" (Andrew Hart); "English Language Teaching, Education, and Power" (Christopher Brumfit); "The Politics of Language: Spain's Minority Languages" (Clare Mar-Molinero); "Syntactic Variation and Change in Contemporary German" (Patrick Stevenson); and "Eurodisney, French Politics, and the American Dream" (Bill Brooks). (Contains chapter references.) (NAV)

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Working Papers

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Edited by

George Blue

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We are most grateful to J M Dent for permission to reprint the poem on p.104 "The hand that signed the paper" from Dylan Thomas, Collected Poems.

Contents

	Page
Introduction *George Blue*	v
Managing Open Learning *Vicky Wright*	1
Self-Assessment of Foreign Language Skills: Does It Work? *George Blue*	18
Language Awareness and Language Development: Can We Trace Links? *Janet Hooper, Rosamond Mitchell and Christopher Brumfit*	36
Learners' Accounts of their Errors in a Foreign Language: An Exploratory Study *Francine Chambers*	56
Crocodile Dundee Meets his Match in Urdu: Brixton Primary School Children Shape a Multilingual Culture *Charmian Kenner*	71
Literacy, Values and Non-Literary Texts *Andrew Hart*	79
English Language Teaching, Education and Power *Christopher Brumfit*	94
The Politics of Language: Spain's Minority Languages *Clare Mar-Molinero*	106
Syntactic Variation and Change in Contemporary German *Patrick Stevenson*	114
Eurodisney, French Politics and the American Dream *Bill Brooks*	127

5

Introduction

This third volume of *CLE Working Papers* returns to the pattern of the first, in that there is no single theme running through the collection. Rather, it is intended to bring together a number of concerns across the whole range of the Centre's work at a time of intense activity and change in the area of language in education.

The first two papers are representative of much of the work that has been going on in resource-based learning, which has come to play a very important part in the foreign language curriculum at the University. Vicky Wright's paper gives an overview of the field, relating theoretical considerations to some of the practical aspects of setting up and developing a self-access language resources centre. In an appendix to this paper, Romay Garcia talks about the experience of teaching and learning Spanish with a substantial resource-based learning component. My own paper takes up the vexed theme of self-assessment, which can be an important aspect of self-directed learning and yet which often poses problems to learners.

The next four papers are accounts of classroom research and classroom practice. Janet Hooper, Rosamond Mitchell and Christopher Brumfit report on aspects of a research project funded by the ESRC, where they investigated the language awareness of secondary pupils of French, German and Spanish and the extent to which their foreign language production was influenced by their explicit understanding and knowledge of the language. Francine Chambers continues in a very similar vein, but focusing on learners' errors in written French and their explanations of why they produced these forms and what they were trying to say. We then move on to the bilingual classroom and Charmian Kenner's study of how a group of children participated in role plays where all the participants had the opportunity to use the language of the bilingual children, thus enhancing the prestige of these languages. Andrew Hart's paper addresses the question of values within the context of spiritual and moral development, and the ways in which media education can provoke questions about values and ideology.

The next three papers have a sociolinguistic orientation. Christopher Brumfit examines the role of English in the world and the power that resides in the language as part of the context within which English Language Teaching takes place. Clare Mar-Molinero's paper deals with the Castilian language and the

position of the three major minority languages in Spain. Patrick Stevenson takes a small area of German grammar and investigates the contexts within which variation from the prescribed norm is possible or even likely.

The collection ends with a paper by Bill Brooks describing something of a conflict of cultures, and bringing us up to date (as far as it is ever possible to be up to date) with the rather bizarre history of Eurodisney.

As with previous collections, all of these papers are offered as working papers. They are not necessarily intended to be in polished or final form, and certainly they do not represent the last word on the various subjects addressed. Comments will always be welcomed by the authors, as will suggestions for topics to be covered in further volumes of *CLE Working Papers*.

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MANAGING OPEN LEARNING

Vicky Wright

1 Introduction

1.1 The resources and facilities

The Language Resources Centre within the Language Centre, itself an integral part of the School of Modern Languages at Southampton, has expanded over the last three years to provide a range of self-access resources and facilities in a pleasant working environment for language learners throughout the university.

Starting with a small one-room library, a teaching laboratory and a smaller self-access laboratory, the Centre now offers multi-media[1] language learning materials in four linked resource areas. The two heavily used laboratories remain, with the addition of a small satellite television viewing corner to relieve pressure elsewhere. There is also a reading room offering a quiet working environment, dictionaries, a number of foreign language newspapers and journals and a language teaching library. The two remaining areas offer a variety of language learning resources for all the languages taught within the School of Modern Languages (Catalan, Dutch, EFL, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish) plus a selection of self-access courses covering lesser-taught languages.

The resources in the main self-access areas are constantly being developed but include: reference and course books; audio and video libraries; topic boxes (easily portable storage containers offering selected laminated texts, audio and video recordings, together with associated exercises, activities, glossaries and transcripts) and boxes with a language level or skill focus often consisting of published materials cut up into individual working units, put together with a

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[1] There is increasing confusion over the term ***multi-media***. Multi-media usually refers to the availability of what are often related materials in different media, ranging from the printed page to audio and video recordings. These are often referred to as the traditional media. ***Multimedia***, on the other hand, increasingly refers to the availability on a single piece of computer software, or at a single computer work-station, of a range of media which might include print, audio and video. ***Hypermedia***, a more recent computer term, refers to 'libraries of multimedia materials which can be accessed in a non-linear, random fashion' (Emery, 1993: p.68).

key, and then laminated. There is a certain amount of traditional CALL software available but we are adding an increasing number of computer-based language and research tools, ranging from concordance packages, electronic dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopaedias and multimedia materials, through foreign language wordprocessing with grammar and spell-check facilities to newspapers on CD Rom, email and access to the campus network and Internet. (See Mar-Molinero and Wright, 1993, for a more detailed description of types of resource available and the rationale behind their organisation.)

Individual computer workstations together with audio and video playback facilities available throughout the area encourage the integration of media and allow learners to work with a range of resources in one location. The layout of the working areas also allows learners to work collaboratively around tables if they wish, while the portability of the resources enables materials to be easily distributed round a group or used by individuals in their favoured working corner.

1.2 The language learners and the open-learning continuum

If a completely open learning system is infinitely flexible and "learners can learn whatever they wish, for whatever reasons, wherever they choose, however they choose" (Lewis, 1986:70), then the many (around 30 an hour) and varied users of the Language Resources Centre could be seen at various points of an open-closed learning continuum. Learners range from the "drop-in" language learner (perhaps a member of staff or an overseas student who wants to brush-up on a language) who ask for very little guidance, decide their own language learning needs and plan their own course of work to the language learner (perhaps a student within the School of Modern Languages or a student from a science or engineering faculty studying a language as a small part of their degree) who has been directed to a particular set of materials and who must work through them within a pre-determined time-limit. Given the range of students we serve and their differing needs, the courses and the materials we provide will also necessarily be at varying points on the learning continuum.

Open learning does not only imply a high degree of flexibility and learner choice (open learning is increasingly being termed flexible learning: Wade, 1994), it also implies a view of learning as a continuing process, not just the acquisition of a set body of facts. It implies the development of learning

strategies and a move towards learner autonomy, taking responsibility for one's own learning (Little, 1990:70). As part of our own learner and staff training we provide, amongst other things, introductory familiarisation sessions, staff workshops, timetabled learner support, and language learning guides.

Open learning is also often associated with the use of new technologies and multimedia resources which allow a flexibility to teaching and learning which is perhaps especially valuable to the language learner. (See Mar-Molinero and Wright, 1993, for a more detailed overview of current theories in open learning.)

2 Aims and objectives

A resources adviser was appointed in 1991 with the specific aim of developing an open learning approach to language learning. General objectives covered four main areas.

2.1 Learning

- The provision of a wide range of resources to suit a variety of interests and needs;
- The provision of a richer language learning environment;
- The establishment of an environment in which students will develop more efficient and responsible learning strategies;
- The encouragement of greater learner independence.

2.2 Teaching

- The development of classroom and open learning methodologies for the mutual enrichment of both;
- The encouragement of a learner-centred approach to course and materials design;
- The development of new teaching/learning materials.

2.3 Research

- The provision of an additional context and source of data about foreign language learning;
- The provision of a stimulus for increasing second language acquisition research.

2.4 Academic management

— An investment for an uncertain future with increasing student numbers, rather limited financial resources and fewer teachers;
— The provision of a focus for staff development, discussion and stimulus.

3 Design considerations

Following on closely from thoughts on general and more specific aims and objectives there was a need to consider a range of factors over which we had either total, partial or no control.

3.1 The users

We had firstly to consider the users of the Centre, both learners and teaching staff, their needs, interests and expectations. An imposed learning situation which did not carry along its users was bound to fail. Basic PR work, the establishment of good relationships between users and providers, could only bear fruit.

3.2 The learning situation

The learning situation itself had to be examined within the wider context of the university as a whole. There was a need to consider, for example, the departments whose students were following courses within the Language Centre. We had also to consider general learning objectives and the degree of autonomy that learners should achieve together with the amount of self-instruction that was likely to be feasible.

3.3 Costs

More practical considerations involved the cost effectiveness of what we planned, what could be achieved with the space available together with future expansion possibilities. The design and layout would be particularly important if we wanted both to provide a pleasant working environment and to encourage particular ways of working.

3.4 Materials design

From the point of view of general materials design we needed to consider the type of materials we wanted to offer, how they were to be prepared, who was to be responsible for their preparation and whether there was to be a 'house

style'. If possible we wanted instant feedback from the users. There needed to be a consideration of copyright implications, of how materials were to be stored and displayed. Materials needed to attract the learner and be accessible, and any cataloguing system had to be user friendly.

3.5 Staffing needs

There needed to be a consideration of technical and secretarial support, materials producers and developers, advisers to support the learners, a librarian and at the management level, a coordinator. In practice this would probably mean a number of individuals acting under several headings. Added to these practical considerations there needed to be a discussion of general access and opening times and of maintenance of materials and equipment.

3.6 Training and evaluation

Final considerations were staff development and training, which would possibly be on-going; learner training, which could be achieved with the use of specially developed materials and experienced helpers; and lastly, general monitoring of patterns of use and evaluation of the whole project. Use could be monitored with regular 'snapshot' studies (e.g. Watson, 1993) and evaluation would need to consider increased use and command of the target language and, perhaps, changes in attitudes.

3.7 An evolutionary process

In practice, many decisions on design were made and are still being made as part of an evolving process. Trial and experiment have been important.

4 The planned and the unexpected: achieving our aims

It is probably too early to say how far we have achieved many of our original objectives but there have been many benefits in terms of motivation and general approaches to teaching and learning, in levels of learner autonomy and degrees of openness and cooperation between both staff and students and both within and without the classroom. There was at the outset, also, an unanticipated amount of resistance to change from many different quarters, from both staff and students.

4.1 Achievement of aims: learning

4.1.1 A richer language learning environment

Over the last few years language learners coming to the Language Centre have had easy access to materials serving a range of needs, interests and language abilities. Learners have the choice of approaching the materials from a topic or content-based viewpoint or from a language skill focus, or both. They can, for example, take up-to-date materials from the *Los Medios de Comunicación* topic box to find out more about the Spanish language media or they can equally well decide to focus on listening comprehension skills, grammar or vocabulary using the same materials. Learners have the choice of working on their own with self-access materials or in groups. With a wide variety of materials and working methods available we believe that we have provided a much richer learning environment, one where learning has become a less solitary affair and where self-access work and more formal learning can complement each other.

4.1.2 Development of efficient learning strategies and a move towards independence

It seems that learners are willing to be guided towards adopting appropriate learning strategies and to develop a degree of independence (Piper, 1992). Materials in the Centre are fairly easy to find once learners have asked themselves the question what type of materials they are looking for and what they want to use them for. Many materials for drop-in learners are colour coded for level, and self-assessment and needs-analysis questionnaires senstise the learners to their needs and direct them towards the appropriate materials. The labels on the boxes of materials and book shelves also help to sensitise the newly-arrived and untrained language learner to the type of language learning focus that it is possible to adopt. Some courses have also used learner diaries to help learners reflect on the learning process and on the learning strategies they use. Study guides (which focus on a particular area such as using the dictionary, writing a report or learning vocabulary) and access guides (which help learners locate relevant materials) are also available. We have found that these are particularly useful for non-academic staff introducing a new student to the Centre and for language staff who are not familiar with the resources.

We have learnt from experience that learners are willing to seek out what they need and even to experiment, but that a good 'tour' of the Centre is indispensable even if it means reaching several hundred students at the beginning of the year. The tour covers ways of using the materials and equipment available - "don't just sit and watch satellite television for an hour, you will achieve far more if you set yourself a learning task. As you watch the French news look at the newsreader's body language: how does it differ from a British newsreader's? Or write down and learn ten words you didn't know before." The tour is usually followed up by a familiarisation exercise, or quiz, in the target language, which asks questions about the materials and resources and gives some 'hands-on' experience of using them.

It is true that some students have resisted the move towards a self-access approach when teaching contact hours have been reduced for reasons of economy, but there are also learners who have become truly autonomous. One EFL drop-in learner was found to have developed a complete plan of study around a study guide listing ten steps towards improving general language learning skills.

4.2 Achievement of aims: teaching

4.2.1 The development of classroom and open learning methodologies

This has been a particularly interesting area where the presence of a resource base has led to the development of new and interesting ways of integrating class teaching and an open learning approach. The general aim has been to move away from a traditional course dominated by the classroom towards the expectation that learners will invest some non-class time in working through materials and activities available elsewhere. Second Year students of Spanish, for example (Mar-Molinero, 1993; Mar-Molinero and Wright, 1993), were asked to work through a number of materials in the Spanish *Ecología* topic box. Working in small groups, they were expected to monitor their work through diaries, build up vocabulary lists and prepare themselves for a class debate. They also had to find additional materials of their own. The lecturer's specific aims in this exercise were to push her students into taking greater control of their own learning, to widen their exposure to extensive reading and listening texts, to work more readily in supportive groups and to monitor how they themselves were learning (see the appendix for a full description of this programme by a teaching member of the Language Centre, initially uncertain of such an approach).

There are now a number of Language Centre courses which ask learners to work, either in their own time or in supervised self-access sessions, on key materials held in the Resources Centre. Many courses, such as the Master of Engineering with European Studies, find it particularly useful to base their syllabus around the use of topic-based materials, and the development of new materials for these courses is on-going.

Another member of staff (Paterson, 1994) has moved on a slightly different tack to make the maximum use of resources already held in the Centre by developing a self-access pronunciation workshop based on published materials. Frustrated for many years by the limitations of trying to deal with the individual problems of a mixed group of overseas pre-sessional students in a laboratory session, he has developed a diagnostic test which is administered to students and marked. Students are given a record sheet which suggests appropriate materials for their particular problem areas, and they then work away with enthusiasm on what is in effect a course specifically designed for them.

4.2.2 Further developments

The development of a resource base, an interest in self-access materials and an open learning philosophy have, in fact, led to further projects which have considerably widened the scope in which the Centre operates. The development of a series of integrated materials has continued along several fronts.

The Language Centre at Southampton has been working alongside the universities of Cambridge and Kent (CKS) in an HEFCE funded TLTP (Teaching and Learning Technology Programme) project to develop French and German topic-based self-access materials for use by undergraduate scientists and engineers in the UK. Design considerations here have very much followed the line adopted as a general principle for all our self-access materials. The learning focus should be relevant to the learners' needs, the materials should be flexible and, thus, often non-linear in outline. They should, where possible, be based around authentic texts in a range of media accompanied by activities which exploit the texts in such a way as to give the learners the necessary knowledge, skills and strategies to use the language meaningfully for themselves in a range of contexts. The materials should be motivating, well presented and offer full learner support by means of keys, transcripts and

notes. Extra flexibility is being added to the materials using the GUIDE hypermedia platform for related CALL activities. The project will be externally evaluated by CILT.

Further open learning possibilities have been offered by the multimedia platform MICROCOSM. In a second TLTP project which is developing the use of MICROCOSM at Southampton, the contents of the entire Spanish *Ecología* topic box (printed texts, video, audio, photographs, slides, exercises, keys, transcripts) have been incorporated in a single computer package which allows the learner to access any item (and any other language tool) in a flexible and exciting way. Although Microcosm based learning materials have been received enthusiastically by staff and students in other discipline areas their usefulness in a language learning context has not yet been evaluated. This will happen over the next few months but one First Year engineering student with access to a demonstration module which uses part of the CKS German materials (including the GUIDE CALL component) declared that she was unable to tear herself away! Present thinking sees the creation of a virtual multimedia language resources centre which would be available at a number of workstations across the campus as a distinct reality.

4.3 Language acquisition research

It is very tempting to believe that all that is new and exciting will achieve its stated goals - and to some extent if it is exciting enough it will do just that - but there is also a need to find out how and if those goals are achieved. Piper (1992) looked at the way in which the group of second year Spanish students mentioned in 4.1.1 above approached the learning task they had been asked to perform. She looked at the type and variety of strategies that learners employ and at their expectations and assumptions about language learning. She also monitored and evaluated the exercise in pedagogical terms. The findings were fairly revealing, showing that, for the most part, students did come to manage their own learning better even if they were not as aware as they might have been of how and why they had achieved this. These particular learners were new to the whole concept of learner independence and it does seem clear that the change in focus takes time to be accepted. Little (1990: 12) comments how difficult it is, in an examination dominated system, to shake a student's belief that a teacher's role is to prepare them to pass exams. These learners were just as product-oriented in their view of what they had achieved, and some were

resentful that they had invested time and effort and had not been given the opportunity to show all that they knew.

Another study (Randall, 1994) is looking at a group of learners at the other end of the open-closed learning continuum. Randall is looking at the language learning strategies used by truly self-directed learners, in this case overseas students who have come to the Resources Centre to work on their English and have not been directed to come as part of a language course.

4.4 Achievement of management aims

Not all staff and students have immediately welcomed the move towards a different teaching and learning environment. Others have been won over by very practical considerations and the need to cater for more students with fewer teaching staff and fewer contact hours. It may be that this very practical enthusiasm is in fact somewhat misguided, since the cost of provision of a full range of resources is not cheap, nor is the cost in staff time for development and clerical and technical maintenance of these resources.

4.4.1 Resistance to change

It would be naive to suppose that there has been no resistance to a change in the way things have 'always been done', to a re-thinking of the teaching/learning process and to the introduction of new technologies. To some extent this is the 'territoriality' aspect, the invasion of previously controlled territory. For some teaching staff this may mean a very distinct fear of losing authority, of losing control of the classroom and of what is learnt there. At office and administrative level these fears are no less real.

Learner resistance to change has been mentioned above. High-flying students who have achieved good results in an educational system dominated by marks and exams may be reluctant to take control of their own learning. They may be unable or unwilling to reconcile a system which is still product-oriented with new approaches to learning.

There is bound to be some institutional resistance to change, although at national level there has some been financial encouragement by the funding councils of more flexible course provision (Wade, 1994). Written examinations continue alongside more continuous forms of assessment and self-assessment,

if considered (see Blue, 1988), more often provides a means towards formative rather than summative assessment. This situation is likely to remain for the foreseeable future.

4.4.2 Increasing openness

Over time, much of the initial resistance has melted away, due as much as anything else, perhaps, to the enthusiasm of those who introduced the new concepts. This is as much true of the influence on students of an enthusiastic and inspiring teacher as on other members of staff.

The Resources Centre has steadily become a focus for both teaching staff and learners, where both can meet. The Centre has also been the location and stimulus for a series of practical workshops for School of Modern Languages staff.

5 Changing patterns of teaching and learning: conclusions

5.1 Progress to date

A move towards an open learning approach has been rewarding in terms of generally increased motivation amongst staff and students, in terms of learning effectiveness and, we believe, since this has not yet been monitored, of an increase in use of the target language. It has also allowed us to respond quickly and flexibly to changing needs. Moreover, the use of equipment and up to date technology in the teaching and learning process gives important skills which are rapidly becoming commonplace in many spheres of life.

5.2 Implications for other language teaching/learning contexts: is increased learner independence the answer?

It is true that most language learners in institutional settings, especially schools, will not have access to a wide range of language resources and equipment, but a change in teaching and learning focus to a less teacher-centred approach can be achieved with minimal resources. Texts and exercises in plastic envelopes can be stored in cardboard boxes; perhaps there only needs to be one cassette recorder with a multiple headphone attachment. A box of games and activities, possibly a portable television and video player and a box of videos would all be valuable extras.

But the move to greater learner independence is not just dependent on the provision of interesting resources, it also depends on the willingness of the teacher to encourage that independence. Many teachers will need to ask themselves the question: "How can we enable the learners to function independently when the teacher is no longer there?" (Page, 1992).

In a rapidly changing and unpredictable world learners must be able to apply the skills they have learnt, the knowledge they have acquired, and they must have the independence to carry on learning and adding to what has been started in the classroom. The language teacher can and should be an important part of this process.

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Appendix

From *ecología* to *los medios de comunicación*: A Spanish Case Study

Romay Garcia

1 The background

The Second Year Spanish language course consists of 58 undergraduates from the School of Modern Languages taking either Single or Combined Honours degrees. Language levels are on a learning continuum from an *ab initio* First Year intake to native speaker. The majority are post A-level.

The course is structured round three class contact hours per week: one with a member of the Spanish Section who focuses on written texts (particularly newspaper articles), using them for comprehension and grammatical analysis (5 groups); one with the language assistant for oral practice (4 groups), and one with myself focusing on audio and video materials for aural comprehension (3 groups). Large classes now dictate that the aural comprehension classes take place every second week with self access work being set for the missed hour. This usually takes the form of a task (listening comprehension, oral presentation, video programme, diary or log) to be prepared for class, either with myself or the language assistant.

The language programme (piloted in 1991, see Mar Molinero, 1993) is taught via a succession of topics (*Ecología, Racismo, Nacionalismo, Política y Economía* and *Los Medios de Comunicación*), which permits a certain amount of cohesion and integration between the three classes.

The aims of the aural comprehension/self-access part of the course is to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and to prepare them for their year abroad and the dissertation they will write while there. To that end, they are given focused tasks which require them to take advantage of the wider resources available to them in the Language Centre, and the University library if they so wish. All classes are conducted in the target language and students are also encouraged to communicate in Spanish while working in groups during the self-access hour. All handouts (course outlines, task descriptions, exercises) are in Spanish.

With more emphasis being placed on the language learning process than the product in this type of programme, assessment inevitably involves attendance

(i.e. participation). Since participation in the end product of a topic module usually pre-supposes preparation (particularly if the product is a video-recorded debate), this is not thought to be problematic. However, students often feel frustrated that their 'performance' is not commensurate with the amount of work they have put into a task and need constant reassurance that their efforts will be reflected and rewarded either in the more traditional, written assignments they submit or in the sessional exams.

Partly because of increasing numbers, students are increasingly being asked to work in groups and to submit group rather than individual projects. While this approach does indeed reduce staff marking time, its now almost universal application in a range of classes often results in group hysteria amongst students, bringing into question its ostensible objective: developing students' organisational skills. Individual students may find themselves working in three or more different groups in any given week, having to organise, contact and communicate with some 15 other students with different timetables. Having first responded to these very real difficulties by setting a module assignment for individual submission and regretting it, I subsequently attempted to ensure that most group activities could be carried out in the self-access hour. An inevitable problem with having only fortnightly classes is one of balancing the students' need to 'learn something new' (i.e. attend what they consider to be a traditional language class) with the need to monitor and/or evaluate the task completed during the previous week. Where possible we have tried to circumvent this by using the class with the language assistant for either presentation or feedback sessions. However, the physical structure of the course makes this difficult as students are grouped differently for each class.

The Topic Boxes are central to the resources the students are asked to use to research their projects. To date there are eleven of these boxes for Spanish, each dealing with a different topic. Students are also encouraged to watch satellite television (particularly the news) and videos from the general video library and to read the magazines and newspapers available in the Resources Centre.

2 *Los Medios de comunicación*

Perhaps the most fully integrated module studied recently, in terms of both cooperation and coherence between the three language classes and use of resources, was *Los Medios de Comunicación*. During the text-based class students

looked at censorship in the press and *televisión basura*. With the language assistant they looked at advertising in the Spanish media.

The three classes with myself were spent looking at the changing role of the media during the transition to democracy in Spain, Carlos Fuentes and the role of TV in contemporary Latin American society, and García Márquez on the telenovela and the interface between literature and film. These were all video-based activities. In addition, students were asked to complete a listening comprehension exercise in one of their self-access hours. This was discussed later in class. Twenty minutes of one class were set aside for coverage of a grammar point (*para* and *por*) for motivational purposes.

The self-access project for this module was to be the preparation of a 5-10 minute programme which the students themselves would record on video during the penultimate week of the six week module. As this was to take place during their hour with the language assistant, for reasons of practicality students were asked to form groups from within this class. Three groups arranged to borrow the video camera and to film elsewhere. Feed-back sessions were held during week 6, when the students watched their programmes with the language assistant. She and I then watched them and based our assessment on the contribution made by each student, research carried out, language use, innovativeness and participation, bearing in mind that one member of each group was behind the camera.

Students were given a fairly wide rein over the contents of their programmes, although it was suggested that they include two or more of the following: news and weather, an interview, a magazine programme, a documentary, advertisements, a *Mesa Redonda* discussion. Most did in fact stick to these guidelines, although one of the most spontaneous and entertaining was a Spanish version of *Blind Date*. Not surprisingly, this group contained some of the more confident and extrovert, if not competent, students.

All in all, despite much reticence and yawning when given the task ("we don't know what we're supposed to be doing","who'll work the video?") the vast majority of students became thoroughly involved in the activity and even enjoyed it, as the videos testify. Motivation was enhanced by giving the students a relatively free rein over their choice of programme in an area with

which they are culturally familiar (the media) and allowing them to produce it themselves and therefore perform to and for each other. In terms of evaluation and assessment it proved to be a good leveller for a group with such diverse language abilities. While some post A-level students simply read from a printed text, most *ab-initio* intake students put a great deal of effort and often research into their programmes and discussion topics. The usefulness of such an activity in reducing inhibitions also became apparent during a subsequent module, *Ecología*, where students were asked to stage a *Question Time* debate around previously prepared questions.

SELF-ASSESSMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS: DOES IT WORK?

George M Blue

Introduction

Originally, interest in self-assessment developed out of a more general interest in the area of autonomous learning or learner independence. It has normally been seen as one of the more problematic aspects of self-directed language learning (Blue 1988). It is widely recognised that learners may find it difficult to be objective about their own language level, or that they may not have the necessary expertise and experience to make judgements of this sort. Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons why self-assessment should be encouraged. Dickinson (1987) gives three justifications for self-assessment, which show it to be an important part of learner autonomy. Firstly, learners will find that an ability to evaluate their language level will help them in the learning process. Secondly, it is one of the areas for which learners should learn to take some responsibility in the development of autonomy. Thirdly, it frees the teacher to help with other parts of the learning process.

Oskarsson (1989) talks of six different reasons why self-assessment procedures can be beneficial in language learning, namely promotion of learning, raised level of awareness, improved goal-orientation, expansion of range of assessment, shared assessment burden and beneficial post-course effects. These benefits could apply at least in part to traditional teaching patterns as well as to autonomous learning. Although there is still considerable interest in the role of self-assessment as one aspect of learner autonomy, it has increasingly come to be seen as having a part to play in more traditional patterns of teaching too.

Indeed, it is interesting to note that self-assessment (or perhaps more precisely, self-monitoring of performance) is coming to play quite an important role in British primary and secondary schools, where pupils may regularly be asked to comment on how well they have performed on a particular task, before the teacher adds his or her comments, often confirming the child's evaluation, although sometimes, of course, disagreeing or introducing factors that the child may not have thought of. The same happens at the end of the school year, when pupils are asked to comment on what they have achieved in each subject

during the year before the teacher adds his or her comments to the subject review. All this, I believe, stays on the child's file and, of course, in these days of universal charterage, a copy goes home to the parents.

One reason why self-evaluation has come to assume such importance in the educational field generally is that there is an increased desire for pupils to be self-critical in their work as they go along. Of course, it may be that evaluating the work they have done in all the National Curriculum subjects, plus a few more thrown in for good measure, can become rather tedious for pupils, though probably not as tedious as all the report writing and record keeping that teachers are now routinely involved in. One benefit of self-evaluation to pupils is that it may help them to assess the effort they are putting in, which may encourage them to try harder next time. It may also help them to begin to appreciate what they are capable of for themselves, building a positive self-image, and increasing their self-confidence. It may help them to realise that there is a distinction between competence and performance and to think consciously about their strengths and weaknesses, so that they know where to direct their efforts in future.

One thirteen-year old supplied the following spontaneous comments about self-assessment:

> you have to think of something to put;
>
> it's really hard;
>
> it's horrible to do;
>
> the teachers aren't happy if you just write one line.

These initial reactions then gave way to some more reflective comments:

> it's often a description of what you've done and whether you've enjoyed it rather than about how well you've done;
>
> once a year isn't enough.

In some ways these last comments were very perceptive. It is difficult to judge the quality of one's own performance, and it is certainly necessary to be assessing oneself regularly and probably in smaller chunks if the task is not to become too daunting or if progress is to be monitored in any meaningful way.

In the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), where attendance at classes is often purely voluntary, and where learners often have to cope with numerous demands upon their time and energy, many of the benefits mentioned above are likely to be particularly relevant, but there are a few more besides. EAP students can gain considerable benefit from developing their self-assessment skills, whether they are working in a self-instructional mode or attending classes, or a combination of these.

If we consider first of all initial self-assessment, the aim is primarily for students to measure their present level of competence in the different skills and perhaps to compare it with their target level. If their self-assessment is accurate it will help them to determine their priorities in language learning, an important step in the process of assuming responsibility for learning. It may also be useful for the purpose of placing students in classes.

Self-assessment is of course an on-going process, and the aim of self-assessment at an intermediate stage in a language learning programme is for students to think about their present level in relation to both their starting level and their target level. This may encourage learners as they think about the progress they have made, although it might also help them to realise that language learning is very time-consuming. It should help them to refine their objectives in the light of the progress they have made to date, since it is possibly not until this stage that realistic goals can be set, and it may help them to think about the efficiency of the learning process and to review their methodology. Monitoring of progress can thus both feed into and benefit from this kind of intermediate self-assessment.

Finally, self-assessment can also be useful at the end of a course of study. At this stage learners need to have a fairly clear idea of what they are capable of in the language and of their limitations. This can give them a more positive self-image and act as a boost to their confidence. However, few learners will ever be completely happy with their level of proficiency in a foreign language, and it can also be a time for planning future learning, which may take place in a less formal way but which nevertheless needs to be programmed into a busy schedule.

Some previous studies (e.g. LeBlanc 1985; Bachman and Palmer 1989) suggest that students are able to assess their linguistic ability fairly accurately, whereas others (e.g. Wangsotorn 1981; Blue 1988) conclude that many students find it very difficult to assess their current language ability. It is arguable that in a

traditional language teaching classroom where attendance at classes is obligatory, this may not matter unduly. However, attendance on many EAP courses is purely voluntary and students may cease to attend and cease to work at their English as soon as they think they have reached an adequate level. This is perhaps even more true of learners following a programme of self-instruction. In such cases self-assessment is an important preliminary step before learners analyse their language needs and set goals for their language learning. In the next section we shall look at how a group of learners actually perform these tasks.

A number of different possibilities for self-assessment are discussed by Oskarsson (1978). The self-assessment questionnaire in use at the University of Southampton builds on his descriptive rating scales, but it also owes a great deal to Ward Goodbody's (1993) work, where she asks students to give paragraph-long answers to a number of questions about their previous language learning experience and their expectations. These longer answers provide an opportunity for tutors to assess students' writing informally without the students feeling that they are being tested.

These self-assessment questionnaires are given to all students registering for EAP courses, both pre-sessional and in-sessional. For the pre-sessional course they serve to supplement the information gained from the placement test and the oral interview. For in-sessional courses students are placed in the appropriate classes on the basis of their self-assessment questionnaires and an interview. The interview explores some of the issues raised in the questionnaire, and students are encouraged to think more fully about their current language level, their language needs and the level they might realistically be able to reach during their time in the UK. Tutors are often able to feed into the discussion their own informal assessment of students' writing, and as the interview proceeds they may be able to give some informal assessment of students' oral ability too.

Pre-Sessional Students

In a previous study (Blue 1988) students' self-assessment ratings at the end of a pre-sessional course were compared with tutors' assessment of the students. The students were unaware of the grades given by the tutors at the time when they completed the self-assessment questionnaires. It was found that, although

there was a generally positive association, it was far from being a perfect match. It was also suggested that some nationalities may be more inclined to underestimate or overestimate their level than others.

On this occasion it was decided to compare students' self-ratings at the beginning of the pre-sessional course with the scores they had achieved in internationally recognised language tests (IELTS and TOEFL). Students would be aware of their scores in these tests, and it might be that these would influence their appreciation of their own level. A large number of the students would be attending the pre-sessional course because their score in one of these tests was not quite high enough to enable them to register unconditionally in the University. Their language level was therefore at quite a high level, though still needing one or two months' further study before reaching the level of linguistic sophistication and accuracy needed for university study.

IELTS (the International English Language Testing System) is widely used for admission to British and Australian universities. It aims to replicate the study environment as far as possible. Students choose from three test modules: physical sciences, life sciences and arts and social sciences, and they are given scores for reading, writing, listening and speaking. Although by no means perfect it has been found to be quite a good predictor of academic success (see Criper and Davies 1988; Blue 1993). Table 1 shows how self-assessment scores compare with IELTS scores.

In the self-assessment questionnaires students rate their level between 0 and 5 in each of the four language skills. Their total scores can therefore vary between 0 and 20, although in practice students on an advanced course would be expected to have scores above 8. For students who had taken IELTS the self-assessment scores range from 10 to 15.5. This is quite a normal range, but the distribution is not what would normally be expected. Students scoring 5.5, 6.0 and 6.5 in IELTS rate their own levels between 10.5 and 14.5, which is more or less the range that would be expected. However, there is a tendency for students with higher IELTS scores to underestimate their level and a very marked tendency for students with lower IELTS scores to overestimate their level, assuming of course that the IELTS scores do measure linguistic ability with any degree of accuracy. The student with the highest self-assessment score in this group (15.5) only scored 4.5 in IELTS, which is an enormous mismatch.

IELTS Band	Self-Assessment Score	Mean Self-Assessment
7.0 (1 student)	13	13
6.5 (4 students)	14.5 13, 13 11.5	13
6.0 (11 students)	14, 14 13.5, 13.5 13, 13, 13 12.5 12, 12, 12	13
5.5 (2 students)	11.5 10.5	11
5.0 (2 students)	13 10	11.5
4.5 (3 students)	15.5 14 12.5	14
Mean IELTS score 5.8	(23 students)	12.8

Table 1: Comparison of self-assessment with IELTS scores

When we look at the correlation coefficient, it turns out to be only 0.02, which basically means that there is no correlation between IELTS scores and self-assessment ratings. Any variation away from the mid-point in the self-assessment can statistically best be explained as a purely random variation. There are a number of measures of association which can more appropriately be used to compare ordinal data. Using the Goodman Kruskal gamma (for further details see Blue 1988) we find that the measure of association is just below 0.1, which means that there is a very slight positive association. Quade's formula shows that this is not significant. In other words, there is a strong probability that these results could have been produced by chance alone.

We come now to look at TOEFL scores and to see how they compare with self-assessment ratings. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is used all over the world, but particularly in North American universities. It is a multiple-choice test which gives separate scores for listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and vocabulary and reading comprehension. It is less clearly related to the academic environment than IELTS, but is nevertheless used with some measure of confidence by institutions wishing to make decisions about admittance to degree programmes. Although it appears to have less face validity than IELTS it does seem to serve as a fairly reliable measure of linguistic ability and a reasonably good predictor of success in the academic environment. Table 2 compares self-assessment with TOEFL scores.

TOEFL scores range from 477 to 623, and there is a greater range of self-assessment scores this time, from 9 to 16. Students who have taken TOEFL seem to be slightly more influenced by their test score when they come to assess their own level. However, the correlation coefficient is only 0.25, with a significance level of 0.18. In other words, there is a positive correlation, though not a very strong one, and there is an 18% probability that the results could have been produced by chance alone. Using the Goodman-Kruskal measure of association we find that there is a positive association of 0.18, which again is not very strong. Quade's formula shows that the significance level is below that required to reject the hypothesis that the result could be due to chance alone. If we look at the four students who gave themselves the highest score (16), we see that whilst two had achieved quite high TOEFL scores (583), the other two had only achieved 530 and 520. On the other hand, the student with the lowest self-assessment score (9) had achieved quite a healthy TOEFL score (560).

We see therefore that many students are not unduly influenced by their scores in internationally recognised language tests when they come to assess their own language level. If the test scores are an accurate reflection of linguistic ability (and there is a body of evidence to suggest that this is likely to be the case), then it would seem that students' self-ratings of their language ability at the beginning of a pre-sessional course cannot be relied upon. Some possible reasons for this are discussed below.

TOEFL Score	Self-Assessment Score	Mean Self-Assessment
623	15	
597	14.5	
593	13	
583	16,16	16
580	13	
570	12, 11	11.5
563	13.5	
560	13, 9	11
547	13	
543	12.5	
540	15, 12.5, 11.5, 11.5, 11.5	12.4
530	16, 12	14
527	15	
523	12, 11	11.5
520	16	
507	13.5, 12.5	13
503	12.5	
487	13	
477	11	
Mean TOEFL score 545	(29 students)	13

Table 2: Comparison of self-assessment with TOEFL scores

Post-course evaluation

Some six months after the end of the pre-sessional course the same students were asked to complete a second course evaluation questionnaire, and at the same time they were asked to re-assess their language proficiency. This meant that students had to be asked their names, and that any criticisms they wanted to make of the course could not be anonymous. This may have reduced the

response rate, as only nine students returned the questionnaire by the due date. These students were aware not only of any scores they may have achieved in internationally recognised English language tests but also of the grades they were awarded and of the detailed comments made by their tutors in their final reports at the end of the pre-sessional course. They were asked to assess their level in the following ten skill areas on a five-point scale:

Reading academic texts with adequate understanding

Reading with adequate speed

Making notes from reading

Writing academic texts which are clearly structured and do not contain too many errors

Writing at reasonable speed (e.g. under exam pressure)

Understanding lectures in own subject area

Making notes from lectures

Taking part in group discussions or seminars

Communicating effectively with lecturers on a one-to-one basis

Communicating effectively with other students.

Table 3 gives the tutors' rank ordering of the nine respondents and also shows how they ranked their own ability five or six months after the end of the pre-sessional course. The final column is arrived at by awarding a score of 5 for each time students have ticked the "native speaker level" box, 4 for each tick in the "very good" box, and so on down to 1 for "beginner level".

One would expect all students to have made progress in the time since they finished the pre-sessional course, and of course some students may have made more progress than others, so that the rank order established then may no longer have been an exact representation of their relative levels by the time of this post-course evaluation. However, one would not expect too many dramatic changes in the overall rank ordering, especially since there were very considerable differences of proficiency level at the end of the pre-sessional course.

The student with the most ticks in the "native speaker level" box was ranked third in the group by the tutors, but was clearly an experienced user of English as a second language. The only other two students to assess their ability at native speaker level in any skill were rated as being in the bottom third of the

Tutors' Rank Ordering and Country of Origin	Native Speaker Level (5)	Very Good (4)	Adequate (3)	Not Very Good (2)	Beginner Level (1)	Total Score
1 Germany		1	8	1		30
2 Lebanon		6	4			36
3 Tanzania	7	3				47
4 Italy		3	5	2		31
5 Italy		1	3	5	1	24
6 Saudi Arabia		5	4	1		34
7 Syria	5	5				45
8 Italy	4	4	2			42
9 Bangladesh		8	2			38

Table 3: Tutors' ranking of students compared with post-course self-assessment

group and certainly in the bottom half of the course as a whole. These two, together with the student rated least proficient by the tutors, actually awarded themselves three out of the four top scores in the self-assessment.

At the other end of the scale, the lowest self-assessment rating is given by the student whom the tutors would have placed in the middle of the group, whilst the student placed at the top of the group by the tutors (and in the top 10% of the course as a whole) achieved the second lowest self-assessment score. Overall, then, it seems that there is not a very good match at all between teachers' assessment of students' ability at the end of the pre-sessional course and their own self-assessment scores two terms later. As we believe accurate self-assessment to be an important factor in the continued language learning (including needs analysis and setting of goals) of such learners, this finding, combined with the results reported earlier, gives cause for some concern.

In-sessional students

Table 4 shows the self-assessment scores of 120 students who registered for in-sessional language courses and of a sub-set of 20 students who were still attending three particular courses on a regular basis by the end of the Spring

Self-assessment score	120 students registered for EAP classes	20 students regularly attending 3 EAP classes
18	2	—
	—	—
17	—	—
	3	—
16	2	—
	4	—
15	10	—
	6	—
14	11	1
	13	3
13	9	2
	7	—
12	11	2
	3	2
11	9	1
	4	2
10	8	2
	1	—
9	5	1
	4	3
8	2	1
	1	—
7	3	—
	1	—
6	1	—
Mean score	12.4	11.1

Table 4: Self-assessment scores of in-sessional students

Term, some five to six months later. These were courses for which I had easy access to the registers. Some other students in the group would have been attending other classes for which I had no attendance records, but the majority would have stopped attending language classes altogether by this time.

One of the particular problems faced by University students trying to continue with their language learning while pursuing their studies in another field is that of prioritising all their different activities. Although improved language will benefit them greatly in the long run, the short-term benefits are not very apparent, particularly as at the more advanced stages of language learning it is difficult to perceive progress. Consequently, although there is a great enthusiasm for language learning, both self-instruction and attending classes, at the beginning of each academic year, both of these modes experience a high drop-out rate as far as EAP students are concerned.

An interesting question therefore is whether those students who maintain their motivation and continue with language learning assess their language level differently from those who do not continue. Two points seem to stand out. Firstly, the self-assessment scores of the group who were still attending these particular classes regularly cover a much narrower range than the scores of all students registering for EAP - only about half the range, in fact, with no very high or very low scores. Secondly, the mean score of these students is substantially lower than that of all students registering for EAP. These findings are based on a very small number of respondents, but they are supported by intuition and by several years' experience of dealing with both successful and less successful language learners. For this reason the following two hypotheses are offered with some measure of confidence.

Hypothesis 1: Learners with low self-ratings tend to persevere with language learning, provided their self-ratings are not too low. It may be the case that students who assess their language level as being on the low side are more likely to see the need to carry on working at their English. Indeed, those who scored above 14, if their assessment was accurate, would probably have been able to cope quite adequtely with the linguistic demands of their studies. What is perhaps more surprising though is that a number of students who assessed their level as very low may also have given up, possibly through discouragement or perhaps because they were struggling so much with their main course of study that they simply could not find the time for continued formal language learning.

Hypothesis 2: Learners with realistic self-ratings tend to set and achieve realistic language learning goals. The students who were still attending these particular classes and therefore still working to achieve their goals had all rated their level as between 8 and 14, which is, after all, a very realistic range. Although we cannot be categorical about this, it would seem likely that those who rated their level as either very good or very bad (whether they were being totally realistic or not) had abandoned any language learning goals they may have had. So it is not enough to sit back and simply complain about how bad some students are at assessing their language level accurately. If accurate self-assessment is an important factor in setting and reaching language learning goals, then a crucial function of the language teacher, helper or consultant is to guide learners towards more accurate self-assessment. The final section of this paper will discuss some of the ways in which this can be done. First, though, we turn to look at some possible reasons for inaccurate self-assessment.

Discussion and suggestions for sensitising students

It will be seen from the different experiences described above that self-assessment is an area that many non-native speaker students have difficulty with, even when they have had feedback on their language level in the form either of grades and comments given by their tutors at the end of a course or of internationally recognised test scores. There are a number of possible reasons for this. A previous study (Blue 1988) has shown that nationality can be an important factor in self-assessment, with some nationalities having a tendency to overestimate their level and others tending towards underestimation. Another factor, which could be related, is who learners compare themselves with. For example, if they have had access to native speakers they will tend to compare themselves with a native speaker model, whereas those whose contact with the language has been through second or foreign language speakers may have a higher view of their own proficiency. Then there is the problem of comparing themselves with other students. This is a double problem since, on the one hand, those who have been selected for study in the UK will often be those who have always been thought of by their teachers (and therefore by themselves) as being good at English (maybe even the cream of the cream) and, on the other hand, there is the problem of oral performance dominating in comparisons with other students, and students who are reasonably confident in class may not realise that their written work is relatively weak.

One possible reason why self-assessment of the type described here may not always be accurate is the fact that students often want to impress their tutors. These self-assessment questionnaires are after all semi-public documents, and the teacher may well believe the student's self-assessment. It would not do for teachers to form a lower impression than necessary, especially since important decisions may be based on this initial impression. However much reassuring may be done, some learners may remain unsure of the real purpose of the self-assessment exercise and the use that will be made of the questionnaires. Then, of course, there is the question of inexperience. Although self-assessment is now quite common in British schools, it will be a new concept to many international students and they may simply need more practice before they learn how to evaluate their level of language proficiency more accurately. It has been suggested that accuracy in self-assessment is related to proficiency, and that students get better at assessing their level as they become more proficient in the language. There is no doubt that they become more demanding of themselves, but my own experience suggests that whereas less proficient language users tend to overestimate their ability, advanced learners tend to underestimate their proficiency level compared with both test scores and tutor evaluations. There is a tendency, therefore, to err in the other direction rather than necessarily to become more accurate.

As we have seen, there is some evidence to suggest that those students who do assess their language level realistically may persevere with language learning to a greater extent than those whose self-assessment is unrealistically high or low. Moreover, an awareness of present language level is an important factor in needs analysis and in setting goals for future language learning. Consequently, we have tried to put in place a variety of mechanisms to help learners to assess their language level more accurately.

The self-assessment questionnaire in use at the University of Southampton is always backed up with an individual interview, whether it be at the beginning of a pre-sessional course or as part of the registration procedure for in-sessional classes. During the interview it is normal to check with students on how they feel about their ability in the different language and study skills, and a certain amount of probing may lead them to question whether they rated their abilities accurately in the self-assessment questionnaires.

Another important means of sensitising students is the feedback that they are given by their teachers. Students who constantly receive positive comments

on their performance will tend to develop a positive view of their language level and to assess themselves accordingly. Those whose written work is constantly covered in red ink and whose oral contributions receive rather less encouragement will generally tend to be more critical of themselves when they come to assess their own language proficiency, possibly failing to recognise what they are capable of. The current trend that we find in some quarters to give only positive feedback (stating what learners are capable of but not mentioning their deficiencies) may help to promote a positive self-image, but it may not always be as helpful to learners as it is intended to be. Students who are constantly told that their work is "good" (and this is a word that must pass teachers' lips very frequently) may have difficulty with being self-critical. As teachers, helpers or facilitators we have to find a way of encouraging learners, helping them to derive satisfaction from their achievements, whilst at the same time holding before them goals for the future and helping them to realise, where necessary, that they still have a long way to go.

We have already discussed self-assessment using descriptive rating scales. However, if learners are to become more proficient in self-assessment they need plenty of practice, and it may be appropriate to use other forms of self-assessment from time to time. If this is done in the target language it can be a useful language learning exercise too. Both Oskarsson (1978) and LeBlanc (1985) have suggested a series of statements about what learners can do in a foreign language, and these can easily be adapted to different learners at different levels and with different needs. Unlike the global statements of ability found in the descriptive rating scales these relate to a large number of very specific tasks that learners can perform in the target language. Learners can either simply tick the statements that they feel are true or they can be asked to give themselves a rating, e.g. always (5), normally (4), quite often (3), sometimes (2), never (1). Examples of the sorts of statements that can be used in an EAP context are:

> When listening to a lecture I can recognise the staging of different points.
>
> I can understand how examples (or jokes) relate to the main points the lecturer is making.
>
> I can understand instructions from my lecturers without asking for repetition or clarification.
>
> If a fellow student has missed a lecture, I can summarise the contents for them, referring to my notes to supply some of the details.

As well as assessing their current level of language proficiency learners have a lot to gain from developing a self-critical attitude towards their performance, and this monitoring of performance will in the long run feed into their self-assessment. An interesting approach to helping learners develop such an attitude with regard to their writing can be found in the "evaluation checklists" developed by White and McGovern (1994). These give a very helpful set of questions to ask either about one's own writing or that of one's peers, for autonomous learners can also support one another. The questions cover the main idea, writer's purpose, content, organisation, cohesion, vocabulary, grammar, mechanical accuracy, and response as readers.

Closely related to the monitoring of performance is the monitoring of progress. It is important for learners to take stock from time to time, to evaluate their learning processes and to assess where they have got to in relation to their learning goals. This may help in reviewing the needs analysis and setting new objectives. Learners using the language resources centre at the University of Southampton are advised to complete a resource-based language learning questionnaire at regular intervals to help them in this process.

Finally, students need constant reminders and methodological guidance if they are to assess their level, monitor their learning and analyse their needs effectively. One of the study guides available for students to pick up in the language resources centre at the University of Southampton is entitled *Ten Steps towards Making your Language Learning More Effective* (Wright 1992). Some of these suggestions have been adapted from Ellis and Sinclair (1989) and Dickinson (1992). In summary, the ten steps are:

1 Analyse your language learning needs
2 Assess your present level
3 Prioritise your needs
4 Work out a plan of study
5 Be realistic in your objectives
6 Keep a record of what you do
7 Monitor the way you learn
8 Take every opportunity to use the language
9 Don't worry about making mistakes
10 Assess your progress regularly.

It can be seen that steps 1, 3, 4 and 5 are to do with needs analysis and setting goals for learning, while steps 2, 6, 7 and 10 are all about self-assessment and monitoring of progress. The reason why these aspects are stressed so much is that we consider them to be so important, especially for autonomous learning. Indeed, informal observation of students making use of the language resources centre suggests that those learners who persist with this kind of self-directed learning and make substantial progress are those who systematically assess their language proficiency, developing their accuracy over time, who analyse their needs and set realistic language learning goals, which they review periodically, and who monitor their own progress. Even if self-assessment is not easy for the majority of language learners, it is essential that they learn how to assess their level with some degree of realism if they are to set and attain realistic language learning goals. It is only as they are able to do this that they will be able to sustain the motivation that is so necessary for the long haul that can be involved in reaching the higher levels of proficiency in a foreign language.

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LANGUAGE AWARENESS AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: CAN WE TRACE LINKS?

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The debate over the place of language awareness in the school curriculum has enjoyed a high profile during the recent development of National Curriculum programmes in Britain. It stretches further back than this, of course. The post-war period had been marked by the rise of experiential approaches in the school language curriculum, and by the marginalisation of traditional 'grammar' teaching in both English and modern foreign languages classrooms. There had been a shift away from the strong and explicit focus on the teaching of grammar which had previously characterised the teaching of foreign languages; similarly, in English mother-tongue classrooms, teachers were espousing 'growth'-oriented philosophies, where the focus was on fostering children's language development through experiential rather than reflective activity. This shift away from traditional approaches to languages teaching drew forth concern in many quarters, and was a contributory factor to the rise of the 'language awareness' movement in Britain throughout the seventies and into the following decade. The eighties saw extensive discussion of the place of language awareness in the school language curriculum, together with implementation of courses (largely by English and foreign languages departments) covering a range of topics such as the structure of language, variation in language use, language variety and change, and child language acquisition and foreign language learning.

The debate has continued into the nineties, and centres to a large degree on the rationales for the explicit study of language in school. Such rationales have typically focused on the intrinsic interest and value of the study of language in its own right, the social and cultural empowerment it offers, and the enhanced motivation for language learning it provides. Foreign language teachers in particular have argued that motivation for language learning can be significantly improved by the study of topics such as the relationships between different languages, and language development in young children (Donmall 1985). It has further been argued that the study of language is essential to an understanding of the human condition, through awareness of

the nature of social interaction, and of personal identity expressed through language choice (Language Awareness Working Party 1985). Similarly, the Report of the National Curriculum English Working Group has stated the case for explicit language study in terms of the intrinsic interest and value of language as a central factor in individual human development, and has recognised its role in promoting children's understanding of their social and cultural environment (DES/WO 1989).

The most controversial and perhaps potentially most powerful rationale for the explicit study of language remains, however, central to the debate: its contribution to the enhancement of language skills. Can we trace connections between reflection on language and language use? The role of conscious understanding in language learning is a much debated question in the field of second language acquisition research, and one on which there is little consensus (Schmidt 1990). Among those who see little role for conscious knowledge in language learning, Krashen is the most ardent exponent (see Krashen 1982, for example). He has elaborated a theory that distinguishes between 'subconscious' acquisition and 'conscious' learning: he posits that a second language can only be acquired via the first route, where the focus is on meaning, and that conscious learning - through an explicit focus on form - is of little use in spontaneous language production and comprehension. In this view, what is consciously learnt only comes into play in monitoring, or editing, language output after it has been produced, and plays no part in the actual process of language acquisition.

However, there are other theories which allow a role for both explicit and implicit knowledge. Bialystok, for example (1978), has developed a model of second language acquisition based on these two types of knowledge which can interact; she suggests that it is through practice that explicit knowledge can turn into implicit knowledge. Thus, 'learning' can become 'acquisition' if it is sufficiently practised. Elsewhere, Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (Sharwood Smith 1980; Rutherford and Sharwood Smith 1985; Rutherford 1987) have argued for 'consciousness-raising', or 'input enhancement', as is later preferred (Sharwood Smith 1993), as a way of facilitating the development of second language knowledge through a deliberate focus on the formal properties of language, in the belief that this will enhance the language learning process.

A third, related position recognises that there is a variety of learner styles, ranging from the careful to the vernacular (see Tarone 1983). The kind of language use engaged in by learners determines the kind of knowledge they acquire; similarly, different kinds of knowledge are used in different types of language performance. Bialystok's model (1984) posits two dimensions of language proficiency, analysed and automatic; the early stages of second language learning tend to be characterised by knowledge that is non-automatic and unanalysed. As learning takes place, awareness increases, and linguistic knowledge gradually becomes analysed by the learner - although Bialystok argues that this does not necessarily operate at the level of consciousness. Analysed knowledge, however, facilitates the development of metalinguistic knowledge; and it is also available to the learner for particular kinds of language use, perhaps more particularly in written production (as opposed to, say, everyday conversation).

Ellis (1985) examines these three positions, the 'non-interface', 'interface' and 'variability' positions, in relation to existing empirical research and the question of how far classroom instruction should aim to raise learners' consciousness of the formal properties of the target language, although the available evidence does not point in the direction of any firm conclusion. This paper seeks to shed a little further light on the debate, by asking whether we can trace links between explicit language knowledge and learners' language use, specifically in the production of written foreign-language text.

The over-arching aim of the two-year research study at the University of Southampton (funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, 1991-1993) was to address the lack of empirical evidence regarding teachers' and pupils' beliefs, understandings and classroom practices in respect of explicit language awareness. Specifically, the study sought to document the understandings of secondary English and foreign languages teachers regarding the nature of language, their beliefs about the role of explicit language awareness in language education, and the way these were realised in their own classroom practices. It also aimed to explore their 13-14 year old pupils' understandings of language, and the ways in which these pupils appeared to make use of explicit language awareness and knowledge in the course of classroom activities and assignments. In three case-study schools in the school year 1991-1992, the teachers' beliefs and practices were documented through

both observation and interview; and the pupils' understandings and knowledge were explored through a range of group discussion and problem-solving tasks. (See Mitchell, Hooper & Brumfit 1994 for an overview report on the project.)

A further, and more tentative, aim was to explore relationships between knowledge and understanding of language and the development of the pupils' mother-tongue and foreign language skills. This final aim was necessarily more tentative, as we were well aware that a descriptive study could provide no definitive answers on any cause-effect relationships which might obtain between explicit language study and the development of language skills. However, given the centrality of this issue in debates about rationales for explicit language study, we were concerned to address it at least in a preliminary way.

The research activity that related most directly to this question comprised a series of interviews with individual pupils and their teachers, focusing on texts recently produced by the pupils in the normal course of their classwork in English and modern foreign languages; here we shall look specifically at some of the foreign languages texts. The purpose of these interviews was to explore the ways in which pupils set about the production of texts, the guidance they were given, and the terms in which texts produced were subsequently evaluated by pupils and teachers. We were interested in learning more about the kinds of analytic ability pupils might display, and the extent to which reference to explicit understanding and knowledge of language would be made, both in talk about the text creation process and also in retrospective evaluation of texts as products. Was it the case that, in the production of relatively considered, classroom-generated texts, pupils could and did draw on explicit understanding or knowledge of language? Did it appear that such explicit language awareness and knowledge had contributed in any significant way to the nature and quality of the texts produced?

In the final fieldwork term (summer 1992), the teachers involved with the project were asked to suggest texts recently or currently being produced by their pupils for this activity. There were five foreign language classes altogether: three French, of which two were upper sets and one was mixed-ability, one lower-set German, and one second-language Spanish group composed of pupils selected on the basis of their previous success in French. Written texts

were suggested by three of the four foreign languages teachers (the teacher of Spanish suggested an oral role-play). The three teachers of French all coincidentally suggested the same type of text, a letter to an imagined pen-pal, though the contexts in which these had been produced were different. One class had produced their letters in the context of a class test, while the other two had been set the task for classwork/homework. The teacher of French and German suggested for her lower-set German group a classwork exercise involving production of individual sentences.

In order to select pupils for individual interview, the teachers were then asked to rank all pupils in the class according to whether they were perceived as weak, average or high in ability in the subject. The researcher then aimed to interview two pupils drawn from each of these groups, making a total of six pupils per class. (In the event, 17 individual pupil interviews, of around twenty minutes each, were conducted across the three French classes, together with five from the German.) The pupil interviews were complemented with parallel teacher interviews, in which the pieces of work produced by three pupils per class were discussed (one from each ability group).

The interviews were guided by a list of issues to be covered in a flexible way, rather than by a tightly structured schedule of questions. Pupil interviews centred around the following issues:

- the guidance given
- sources of help, and advice used
- pupils' own evaluation of the work
- pupils' perceptions of teacher feedback
- pupils' perceptions of progress in this area.

The teachers were asked to explain and comment on the following:

- the aim behind the activity
- the guidance given
- their evaluation of the piece
- the feedback they would consider appropriate, and why.

All interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. A first-stage analysis was then carried out, in which each group of pupil text-based interviews (by school and by subject) was separately analysed, together with the relevant teacher interview. Individual reports were written on each group

of interviews, in which a qualitative interpretation was made of pupil and teacher perceptions and accounts relating to the individual tasks set, using the headings which had originally guided the interviews. The separate task-based papers thus obtained for the foreign languages groups were written up into a more synthetic account which looked for similarities and differences across the classes in the three schools.

There was a divergence in teacher aims and evaluation of the tasks which seemed best accounted for by the teachers' perceptions of their pupils' abilities. In the case of the three teachers of French, a more or less formal agenda of language structure was revealed in the letter-writing task given to their groups:

> It was revision of the basics, and it was the incorporation of 'J'aime', 'je n'aime pas', 'je préfère ... parce que', and then the adjectives ... amongst, you know, amongst the rest, amongst the details about their name, their age, whatever
>
> [School 3, French]

> a writing activity that would suit the whole ability range [...] open-ended enough to let the good ones show what they could do [...] a chance to show that they had an idea of talking in the past, and some extra vocabulary as well [...] I was certainly looking for some of them to be able to come up with some examples of the perfect tense
>
> [School 1, French]

> The whole thing was practising using a future
>
> [School 2, French]

In contrast, the teacher in School 2 had somewhat different aims for her lower-ability German group:

> they had to [...] adapt that sentence to the pictures that they had, they had to put a new name in, they had to put a new amount of pocket money and they had to put new items [...] for some of them it was replacing the vocabulary, for some of them it was just that, and even that was difficult [...] I didn't worry them with this separable verb here, because I think that's beyond what they can worry about
>
> [School 2, German]

Evaluative comments by the pupils were predominantly of the holistic type (e.g. "it was all wrong", "terrible"), with only around a quarter of the comments revealing some inclination to be analytic, for example:

> Well I ... don't think, I think I got all the facts down but I don't know whether it's all in ... proper sentences
>
> [School 1 F, J]

> I think the most marks would have been for the thing that you did last weekend [...] You had to use the pres-, euh past tense
>
> [School 1 F, Sa]

> it looked quite good but, you know, sometimes, you know, these mistakes like the umm the verbs and stuff like this, you know, that I don't understand very much
>
> [School 2 F, P]

Interestingly, the largest number of such comments came from pupils in the French group in School 1, whose classroom had revealed the most explicit teacher commentaries on language (predominantly on French morpho-syntax).

There was also a scattering of pupil comments oriented more towards the function of the text, in terms, for example, of how it might compare to a 'real' letter:

> not the sort of thing I'd write to a French pen-friend [...] If it was like a real letter it would like, be things like about what's happened, like I went ice skating and stuff like that. And I wouldn't exactly be telling them where I lived cause they'd obviously know
>
> [School 1 F, Ki]

When asked about the actual process of creating the texts, the strategies described by pupils varied according to the time and type of help available. The School 1 pupils, producing their letter under the time constraints of a test, seemed to have relied fairly heavily on intuitive strategies. They talked frequently about whether things had looked or sounded right, and guesswork was often mentioned, especially in regard to morphological issues such as gender agreement or the choice of article forms:

> I just guessed [...] 'le jardin' sounded right
>
> [School 1 F, Ki]

> It's just what sounds right and what looks right
>
> [School 1 F, Sa on articles]

> It just comes, cause that's the way we've always done it [...], it just sort of comes, and I goes 'Oh well I'll give that a go' [laughs]
>
> [School 1 F, Ca on perfect tense]

There was also some evidence in pupils' actual texts of the recalling of unanalysed 'chunks', the most obvious case being a high-ability pupil who produced examples such as these:

> J'ai kelage un 14 ans
> Je n'ai parlez vous un Français
>
> [School 1 F, J]

Most pupils' texts showed difficulties at the time of composition in distinguishing between '**je**', '**j'ai**' and '**j'**', for example in 'j'habite' or 'j'ai 14 ans'. Looking back over their texts in interview with the researcher, however, some of them attempted retrospective explanations of apparent inconsistencies in their use of 'je' with various verb forms:

> I think it's cause it's in the, in the present ... tense (...) umm say like 'I am fourteen', not 'I was fourteen' or 'I'm going to be fourteen'
>
> [School 1 F, Sa]

> there's different sort of 'I's [...] cause telling you something about ... sort of saying, that I'm saying that's my name, that's got something afterwards to tell it something ... that's my, that's where, my name, and that's telling you where I sort of live ... it's telling you
>
> [School 1 F, Si]

In School 2, where a stimulus letter was provided and pupils could complete the task in their own time, the main strategy used seemed to be a heavy reliance on the model letter. Discussions with two pupils in particular (one from the 'mid'-ability grouping, one from the 'weak') strongly suggested a tendency to lift whole chunks from the stimulus letter, with little conscious notion of the sense of the constituent parts, only some global understanding of the whole:

> just by looking at it, it looks ... right [...] It just feels as though it looks right
>
> [School 2 F, M]

This was particularly striking in the case of the weaker pupil of these two, who had produced what looked like an impeccable piece of work:

> Cher Philippe,
>
> Bientôt c'est les grandes vacances. Nous avons six semaines de vacances, cette année, j'ai de la chance parce que je vais faire du camping des [sic] les Cornwall en voiture. Je vais partir vendredi prochain avec ['un' crossed out] ma famille. Je vais t'envoyer une carte postale.
>
> [School 2 F, Sa]

However, questioned by the researcher subsequently, she displayed very little comprehension of the meaning of, for example, individual verb phrases or conjunctions:

> P: That one means 'we're going camping in Cornwall'.
> R: [...] which bit means 'we're going'?
> P: Is it 'parce que'?
>
> [School 2 F, Sa: 'parce que' means 'because']

The two pupils identified as 'high' ability, however, copied far less from the model letter. The letter had been written at home initially, without the aid of school reference materials, and the pupils had then been given a follow-up lesson in which to complete it. One of these pupils described the process in this way:

> I'd sort of like left little bits out and when I came into the classroom I filled them in ... so I sort of like looked through the letter again and it had some sentences that I could copy
>
> [School 2 F, P]

The second 'high'-ability pupil seemed to have used the class time to turn the letter she had first written in English (at home) into French as it stood. The three strategies she mentioned - looking at the back of the book, checking with friends or with the teacher - did not include reference to the stimulus letter. Prompted as to the kinds of things she might look up in the back of the book, she replied:

> Words that .. sort of .. umm .. so, you know, how do you say, well "I've been sleeping for sort of seven hours", and you have to find that out .. and you just look up 'sleeping' and .. and you sort of .. work the rest out from there [..] You'd have to put it in a proper sentence .. and .. say 'je vais' or something .. and then put your verb in
>
> [Sch2 F, Z]

Indeed, this pupil (unusually) seemed to have drawn on some such knowledge in producing an exemplary letter. She was able to break her text down quite easily into its constituent parts, and also to talk with some confidence about the building up of sentences, in a way which suggested she had drawn on aspects of conscious language knowledge while writing it. For example, she had correctly used the 'futur proche' several times in her letter, which she said they had worked on in class "quite recently". She explained her approach in this way:

> we had sort of a list of what we had to put in the letter, like umm how long we were going, when, how we were getting there, how we were getting back and when .. so we just had to sort of .. learn the verb and then put it into a sentence
>
> [Sch2 F, Z]

This pupil also reported a guesswork strategy, however, although this was less prominent in her account:

> Well, when I say 'à la' then .. I'm pretty certain that it's 'la' umm but normally I sort of say it through my head and I say 'le' and then I say 'la', and whatever sounds .. sort of better I put [..] normally I sort of rely on guesswork
>
> [Sch2 F, Z]

In School 3, where pupils had a mix of class and homework time to produce notes and then a finished written letter in French, the strategies reported involved mainly an intuitive feel for what sounded or looked right, together with memory of unanalysed chunks and phrases. These pupils spontaneously reported reference to dictionaries, friends or the teacher, in search of vocabulary items, but it seemed they had not regularly referred to available grammar notes to solve sentence construction problems. Where texts had been amended, this had often been in response to the teacher correcting or supplying something. For example, one pupil and her friends, wanting to say when their birthdays were, did not know where to go beyond looking up the content word in the dictionary:

> I didn't know like how it was set out [..] everybody was ask-, on my table that was on the table was asking each other, we couldn't, we could only find 'anniversary', but not like the whole thing in the dictionary, so we asked [the teacher]
>
> [Sch3 F, K]

Another pupil, who had corrected 'je 13 ans' to 'j'ai 13 ans', thought this had been as a result of teacher advice (though he could not remember which was correct, at the time of interview).

These comments from School 3 pupils are interesting in the light of the views from their teacher, who commented explicitly in interview on her view of the link between explicit grammar instruction and the composition process:

> I want them to have that pattern fixed in their brain so they think 'verb, get my verb sorted out, get my tense sorted out with the subject, and my complements, use of adjectives'. If they have that pattern, then they have the confidence to actually approach a piece of writing
>
> [Teacher D, 17.7.92]

Despite their teacher's hopes, however, the pupils surveyed in this class did not, for the most part, seem to have consciously drawn on such language awareness during the actual process of letter composition.

In the School 2 German class, the pupils had been listening to a tape where eight German teenagers talked about their pocket money; they had assembled cut-out picture prompts for each of the teenagers corresponding with the amount of pocket money they received, what they spent it on, and whether they also had a job. Subsequently, they were to stick the pictures in their exercise books, and write sentences about each of the four girls, following the model which the teacher constructed on the board for the first one. The researcher interviews with these pupils revealed a strong reliance on the model sentence:

> [the teacher] did the first one, so it was easy to do these three, cause ... you just had to change a few words around
>
> [Sch2 G, N]

> The first one she wrote on the board and we just had to copy the questions .. down on all of them and write the answers
>
> [Sch2 G, V]

It was equally striking that all but one of the five pupils interviewed appeared to rely heavily on teacher help (this seeming a first resort in the case of the weakest pupils):

> we ask the teacher and she tells us
>
> [Sch2 G, V]

> couldn't do it on our own that much
>
> [Sch2 G, C]

Indeed, one pupil in particular seemed signally to fail to recognise the usefulness of the model sentence; asked whether she and her friend had made use of the example given on the board, she said:

> Didn't bother with that one cause Miss helped us
>
> [Sch2 G, D]

The other strategies commonly reported included working with a friend, and checking in the coursebook "to find words" (lexical items):

> most spellings are in the text book
>
> [Sch2 G, D]

Only one of the five pupils interviewed seemed to have much sense of the constituent parts of the sentences, the others evidencing a more global understanding of their overall meaning, apparently aided in large measure by the accompanying picture prompts. One pupil, for instance, offered 'She spends it on her clothes' for 'Sie gibt das Geld fur'; further prompted as to the word for 'clothes' (which was in fact omitted from her incomplete sentence), she replied "'fur, gibt fur', I think". The higher-ability pupil, however, seemed to have grasped the sense of all the constituent parts of 'Sie hat einen Job', and the need to choose between 'keinen' and 'einen' in the writing of the sentences:

> on the pictures, like some of them had umm some of them had jobs, and some of them didn't have jobs, so you put like 'keinen' for no job .. and that, and umm [..] that ['einen'] means she's got a job [..] [means] 'a', I think or 'one'
>
> [Sch2 G, N]

In contrast with the other pupils, then, she seemed well aware of the meaning of both content and structure words; she was also able to analyse individual words into their semantic components, citing 'Taschengeld' as made up of 'pocket' and 'money', and speculating that 'schriften' in 'Zeitschriften' ('magazines') might mean 'writing'. (Indeed, she made a direct link with teacher talk in this respect, "she taught us about that one, 'Taschengeld'".)

In summary then, across the three schools, the pupils' main strategy in generating texts seems to have been to draw on their already-internalised knowledge (itself a mix of lexical and syntactic knowledge with unanalysed chunks and phrases), to employ an intuitive 'what sounds/looks right' strategy. Where a model text was available, weaker pupils tended to bypass their own knowledge store, however, and copied wholesale. Where time allowed, sources such as the coursebook or dictionaries were used to fill lexical gaps, but there was little evidence of any systematic monitoring and checking of syntactic forms against available reference material.

What further emerged very interestingly from the interviews, however, was the pupils' capacity retrospectively to review their work in the light of their own store of explicit grammatical knowledge. Although it seemed rare for connections to be made between such knowledge and the actual process of text creation, it was certainly not the case that pupils were unaware of aspects of the target language grammars. Across three of the four classes (the exception being the lower-ability German group), pupils displayed evidence of explicit language awareness in this respect; many of them were able, for example, to talk (albeit with varying degrees of confidence) about aspects of verb morphology and gender, and retrospectively to evaluate their work in the light of such knowledge. Representative pupil comments across the three French groups included the following on gender:

> you got different endings [...] 'il' you don't put anything, so it's only one, and if it's 'elle' you put 'e' [...] if it's umm feminine it's more than .. one, you have to put 'e-s'
>
> [Sch2 F, S - 'weak']

> Well, usually it's either feminine or masculine, some things, aren't they? [...] 'windows', say, are masculine ... 'chair' or 'a table' are feminine [...] I think it's most of them. There's only a couple that ... haven't got ... masculine or feminine
>
> [Sch2 F, D - 'high'-ability]

> It's changing the word as well, cause you have to sort of have to change the word, don't you, if it's masculine or feminine [...] either by taking letters off or adding letters on, sort of [...] I think you take letters off for masculine and add them for feminine
>
> [Sch3 F, C - 'high'-ability]

Similarly, in respect of verbs and verb tenses, there was evidence that formal grammar information was explicitly available to pupils. Much class work across the year, in the French groups at least, had centred on the practice of aspects of verb morphology, although the teachers had varied in the extent to which explicit attention had been drawn to these. (With her lower-set German group, the teacher had made a deliberate decision to avoid any consciousness-raising procedures in respect of structure.) Pupils in the French classes therefore had considerable evidence available about the distinctive endings and so forth associated with verb forms, and a wide range of pupil commentary included the following:

like umm saying ... 'I did something' instead of 'I'm doing something', cause that's present tense ... 'I've done something', past tense ... 'I'm going to do something''s ... umm ... future

[Sch1 F, Sa - 'mid'-ability]

that's the dictionary form, that 'aller', and umm we just, she's just told us that umm there's different ways of putting it, according to what's in front of it

[Sch2 F, D - 'mid'-ability]

we've sort of like been learning 'je, tu' and like .. all that, and then writing umm one like 'avoir' is like 'to have', we would write, sort of like write it in English, then rearrange it into French

[Sch3 F, K - 'mid'-ability]

we've been doing about, I think, cause you've got to put an 'r' on the end, haven't you? .. yeah, we've been doing, that's like 'i-r' and 'e-r', and all them verbs [...] it's like the do-, like verb, you change the verb like 'il', 'elle' and all that, and you change it to whatever, like 'i-r'

[Sch3 F, C - 'high'-ability]

Generally, across the three schools, there was a lack of ability to comment on or explain verb morphology with any precision, however; for example, while pupils were for the most part aware that verb forms varied with person, they typically explained this point by citation and illustration, and only a few ventured to formulate more abstract generalisations or rules. Nonetheless, it could be said that a majority of the pupils were developing some explicit awareness of grammatical categories, and of the role of morphology in signalling relationships among them. One 'high'-ability pupil, for example, seemed not to have grasped the principle of the formation of the future in French using 'aller' with the infinitive, as an extract from her letter shows (incorrect usage is highlighted):

Cette année **visiter** à Paris pour deux jours, avec mon école. **Nous arrive** à Paris sur 17 juillet et **nous retourner** sur 19 juillet. **Nous voyage** en avion. Nous allons rester dans un hôtel. **Nous visiter** les monuments historique

[Sch2 F, P]

Indeed, her only correct use of the future using 'aller' ('nous allons rester', 'we're going to stay') occurred in a phrase available for copying in the model letter. However, in interview with the researcher, she revealed a burgeoning awareness of the grammatical categories involved. Commenting on the

teacher's subsequent correction to the opening sentence above, she said "I didn't write like that I was going", and later added:

> you have to, you have to sort of like change it like, if you write 'je' you have to write something else, if you write 'tu' you have to write something else [...] the end bits, the 'e', 'e-r' something [...] we were told like how you change, how you change the end, in class before
>
> [Sch2 F, P]

In a more global comment also, reflecting on her progress over the year, she displayed an increasing sense of structure at work in her experience of learning of the language:

> I think, you know, I have improved [...] because ... I can still like make a full sentence up, before I just used to sort of learn it as single words ... now I can sort of write like as a sentence now [...] because we've been learning stuff, things like how to write in sentences, we're learning different words and which goes with which, like, things like that
>
> [Sch2 F, P]

Such ideas were clearly somewhat fuzzy around the edges, but seemed nonetheless to be gradually coming into place for many of the pupils (in the French classes, at least). What is particularly interesting in the context of the present discussion, however, is the apparent infrequency with which the pupils drew on such explicit understandings in the process of creating texts. There seem, from the evidence available, to have been few connections made between this ability to reflect on the language at their disposal and the use they made of it in generating written text.

One rare example of analysed knowledge being brought into play in the writing process was evidenced in one of the letters, where a pupil had written 'J'aime Guns N'Roses et écouté ma chaîne hi-fi', but then crossed out the accent on the final 'e' of the verb 'écouté'. Talking to the researcher, she translated this sentence as 'I like Guns N'Roses and listening to my hi-fi', and explained the correction in this way:

> it didn't need the accent [...] I just know that if you, if you're saying something you did in the past, it's got to have an accent on it, but if it's just like listening, it doesn't need it
>
> [Sch1 F, Ki]

The letters from this class were, however, written under the time constraint of a test, which was presumably less likely to allow for considered use of any explicit language knowledge available to the pupils. Equally striking, though, and perhaps more telling, was some evidence that information needed to complete the verb forms correctly was ignored even when presented very directly. In the section of the test before the letter-writing task, and on the same page, pupils had been required to complete a series of grammar questions on the perfect tense, "say what this family and friends did last weekend". Of the five pupils who had (more or less) correctly inserted 'j'ai regardé' in this section (two had omitted the final accent), only one then went on to use an accurately formed perfect tense in the letter below, where the rubric required (in part) that they say "what you did last weekend". It is interesting to speculate as to the reason for the apparent lack of transfer between these two adjacent parts of the test; and it is tempting to postulate the existence of different 'mind-sets' for the two activities, the one focusing on form, the other (ostensibly) on message.

A further striking example of this question of availability of knowledge in different settings arose in discussion with a pupil in another of the French classes. This 'mid'-ability pupil spontaneously pointed out the 'avoir' paradigm, copied in her exercise book, as something that might be helpful in writing in French, and in that context could explain that "for the 'nous's you write 'we have' and things like that". But in the context of her own letter, a little further into the interview, she was at a loss to explain the meaning of 'nous avons' in 'Nous avons six semaines de vacances'.

In summary, the researcher interviews with teachers and pupils across the three schools show somewhat mixed evidence. In most cases, the teachers seem to have made a strategic commitment to building up, over time, a 'reference model' of selected aspects of the target language system, with two distinct rationales. The first, more implicit rationale seemed to be that the availability of such a model would enable pupils to monitor their language production, and improve its accuracy, especially in writing. Secondly, it was felt that conscious understanding of the language system would enable pupils to move from rote-learning of phrases to a more creative use of the target language system.

However, there was less evidence that the pupils were making conscious use of such models. The interviews suggested that, in the process of creating written text, pupils were largely drawing on already-internalised knowledge, and were for the most part employing strategies of an holistic, rather than analytic, nature. How might this apparent mismatch be accounted for? In terms of the theoretical models discussed at the outset, it might be argued that Krashen's 'monitor' theory accounts very well for the apparent non-transferability of explicit 'learned' knowledge in the process of the writing tasks. Thus, a number of the pupils were only able retrospectively to apply their conscious understandings of the system of the target language to see where they had made mistakes, or to justify their apparently 'intuitive' choices of the correct target forms.

It is also possible, however, to adopt an 'interface' or 'variability' position in respect of the pupils' written output. It will be recalled that, in the ('lower'-ability) German class, any consciousness-raising in respect of structure had largely been avoided by the teacher, as a matter of principle:

> They'll be able to sort of handle set phrases that they've learnt by heart, they won't know whether this is the right form of verb, this is an infinitive, they won't know anything like that [...] that is a limitation, but then I think it's the limitation of what they can cope with
>
> [5.12.91]

This policy was in contrast to the same teacher's treatment of her ('upper'-ability) French group, where it was deemed important to offer the pupils generalisations about the target language system:

> I mean it's probably less important for speaking it, but I think if they're going to communicate something in writing, I think they do need a certain understanding of that
>
> [5.12.91]

It is particularly pertinent, then, to compare the performances and interviews of the sample of pupils in these two groups. The available evidence points to the gradual development, among a majority of the pupil sample in the French group (as, indeed, in the two other French groups surveyed), of some notion of structure at work in their experience of learning the foreign language, of an emerging explicit awareness of grammatical categories. This awareness seems very largely absent among the pupils surveyed in the German group. If the

presence (or otherwise) of such growing awareness of structure is related to the pupils' performance and commentary on the written tasks, some interesting points begin to emerge. The performance of the German sample was generally poor: sentences were left incomplete, or were inappropriately completed. Moreover, the pupils generally seemed to have little recourse when generating the text beyond calling on the teacher to supply the words needed; the only exception was a pupil (perhaps not coincidentally) with a bilingual background (whose parents' first language was Urdu), who was the only one of the five pupils interviewed who seemed to have much sense of the constituent parts of the sentences.

Among the French sample in this school, however, there was evidence that at least some of the pupils were able to put a developing analytical ability to use in reflecting on their written output; as was also true of the pupils surveyed in the other two French groups. The apparent mismatch between these pupils' ability to be retrospectively analytical and their recourse to more intuitive strategies in the actual process of writing might be explained in terms of an 'interface' position. It might be surmised that the teachers' consciousness-raising procedures in the French classes had facilitated the development of explicit grammatical knowledge in (some of) the pupils; and that such conscious 'learning' as had taken place in this way had interacted with the subconscious 'acquisition' of the target language which more meaning-focused instruction had facilitated. In this way, explicit knowledge had turned into implicit knowledge, which had then been undifferentiated in such learner comments (on the process of text production) as "it just sounded / looked right", but which had been more readily available for retrospective commentary on the product.

However, one might equally adopt the 'variability' position, which posits that the kind of language use engaged in by learners determines the kind of knowledge they acquire, and that different kinds of knowledge are used in different types of language performance. There follow from this two corollaries pertinent to this paper: that the production of more considered written text might be expected to draw on more analytical abilities and knowledge; and that the availability of such explicit knowledge might be expected to be determined both by the classroom environment in which learners find themselves, and by the inclinations of individual learners. Sharwood Smith (1993: 176) makes this distinction when he talks of 'consciousness-raising' as

against 'input enhancement', the first term implying that the learner's mental state is altered by the input, the second that the assumption cannot be made that teacher input will necessarily become pupil intake. According to this position, then, we would expect that, where classroom input had allowed, some pupils would have been able to draw on explicit grammatical knowledge in the production of their written texts; and, indeed, this seemed to be the case. Where this appears not to have happened, it might be accounted for in one of two ways: either because the pupils (for whatever reason) did not pick up on grammatical features explicitly highlighted by the teacher, or because the teacher did not employ consciousness-raising procedures in respect of language structure. Thus, in the sample from the three French classes, there was a minority of pupils for whom notions of, for example, verb morphology remained extremely hazy, in spite of classroom input; and, in the German sample, the evidence would seem to indicate a general absence of any developing sense of a structured language system at work.

While the study discussed here cannot claim to provide evidence of any direct causal links, there would nevertheless seem to be an association between consciousness-raising activity in these classrooms and the language development of some of the pupils surveyed. Even if it could be definitively proved that there are classroom foreign language learners whose language development is in no way enhanced by language awareness activities, it would still seem premature to proscribe classroom activities aimed at promoting grammatical awareness, so long as there are some learners ready to benefit from them.

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LEARNERS' ACCOUNTS OF THEIR ERRORS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Francine Chambers

Finding out some of the processes by which learners produce utterances in a foreign language is no easy task. From the product (learner language) we have to speculate on the processes which remain hidden. Errors in particular have been the focus of much study especially in the last thirty years. However the nature of an error is problematic for the teacher and the researcher who have no access to the learner's processes; another major difficulty is the criteria chosen for describing errors. Learner language, in between the first and the second language, can be seen from different perspectives: for example, errors can be described in grammatical terms with reference to the assumed L2 form targeted and the influence of L1 or they can be described from a developmental perspective focusing on the learning progression. The difficult task is to differentiate between the description of the error and the interpretation and explanation of the process by which it was produced and at the same time to keep in mind that a description, free from interpretation, may be unattainable.

Studies dealing with error classification are a good example of the problem since it is reported that a large number of errors do not easily fit the *a priori* classification based on the target language. Early attempts at error classification showed that a considerable number of errors could not be classified at all. In a study analyzing the errors made by 50 Czech students writing free essays in English, Duskova (1969) claims that nearly 25% of all the errors collected could not be categorised, "being unique in character, nonrecurrent and not readily traceable to their sources" (1969:15). The doubt which hangs over the nature of each error limits the generalisations which can be made from quantitative studies such as error counts and classification of errors.

In the 1960s, contrastive analysis was carried out between L1 and L2 on the assumption that differences between the two language systems were a major source of errors. However, researchers began to realise that many errors could not be attributed to the contrasts between two language systems and that teaching targeted on these contrasts did not prevent learners from making

mistakes. There is little agreement as to the proportion of errors which can be attributed to language transfer from L1. A survey of 8 experimental studies reported by Ellis (1985:29) shows that the percentage of errors deemed to be due to L1 interference could vary from 3% (Dulay & Burt, 1973) to 50% (Tran-Chi-Chau, 1974; Lott, 1983), with 3 studies reporting a figure between 30 and 33%. Ellis also points out that some errors attributed to language transfer could be developmental errors; researchers can be influenced by the theory of second language acquisition in which they are most interested. However, progress has been made by moving beyond the question as to how often transfer from L1 to l2 occurs towards a recognition of cross-linguistic influences (CLI) of many kinds. Kellerman & Sharwood-Smith (1986), who coined the phrase, consider it as :

> theory-neutral, allowing one to subsume under one heading such phenomena as 'transfer', 'interference', 'avoidance', 'borrowing' and L2-related aspects of language loss and thus permitting discussion of the similarities and differences between these phenomena. (1986:1)

Moving away from errors as products to errors as potential evidence of processes leads us to acknowledge the contribution which each learner can make to our understanding of their learning and their processes. I fully endorse Kohn's position concerning the importance of individual studies of learners:

> For my analysis of interlanguage processes ... it is of vital importance to detect and understand just the idiosyncratic form which knowledge assumes in the mind of the individual learner.... Researchers should feel encouraged to seriously probe the possibilities of approaching the learner' s 'real' knowledge as a necessary step in their attempt to understand how he builds it up and makes use of it in his interlanguage activities. (1986:24)

The study presented here assumed that individual learners could offer some insights into interim states of their developing grammar by commenting on their L2 written production.

In the instance of errors for which teachers have no immediate explanation, it is clear that the learner's processes are unknown to us; this is less obvious when we believe that we know what happened only to find that our preconceptions were inappropriate. This can only be demonstrated through an encounter with the learner.

Data collection

Obtaining information from learners themselves concerning the language they have produced adds another dimension to the task of describing the error; this information was gathered in the course of interviews with several learners, who were asked to comment on specific errors.

Learners' retrospective reports have been used to enquire into second language learning strategies, often through interviews dealing in general with views, beliefs and opinions about language learning rather than with a specific task (Bialystock, 1983b; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), but instances of learners' reports on specific features of the language they have produced themselves have rarely been reported in the second language literature. In such studies the report can be either introspective, when the information is still available in short-term memory, or retrospective. The ways of eliciting the data vary; the researcher may elicit data orally or by means of written instructions. The responses can be audio-recorded or in writing. Great care has to be taken of the interviewer's intervention, which could alter, distort or falsify what the learner is reporting. Intervention from the investigator has to be minimal. Oral interviews have the advantage over other methods of being more flexible, giving the researcher the opportunity of adapting to the learner's particular response and allowing more in-depth probing.

Through this method of collecting data, we can access only part of the process, that which makes use of the conscious knowledge, what Bialystock defines as "explicit knowledge" (1978, 1983a) or "knowledge about language", i.e "an explicit, conscious and articulated understanding of language" (Mitchell, Brumfit & Hooper, 1993). The major objection to the value of such data is based on the assumption that much of language learning takes place at an unconscious level and is therefore inaccessible (Seliger, 1983). However, in defence of verbal report data, Cohen (1984) pointed out that:

> it has become apparent that it is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain accurate insights about learners' conscious thought processes through conventional observations of teacher-centred classroom sessions. By 'conscious thought processes' what is meant are all thoughts that are within the realm of awareness of the learner, whether they are attended fully or not. (1984:101)

After discussing the main criticisms made by Seliger, Cohen concluded that "Seliger's attack was too strong" although he accepted that caution must be used in the collection of the data. Learners' retrospective accounts of their mistakes must provide some information about the current understanding of a learner but we cannot be sure that this was precisely the knowledge which was drawn upon at the time of production. However, it is still the case that the learner's comments have to be part of their knowledge about language; pure invention on the learner's part seems rather unlikely. In the context of instructed second language learning, where interaction between teacher and learner takes place, often through the means of verbal explanation, this kind of data can first of all provide some feedback on the nature of the pupil's intake from the explicit class teaching about language. In studies of instructed second language acquisition, then, learners' accounts of what they have understood cannot be realistically considered an irrelevance.

The question regarding the acceptability (or otherwise) of verbal report data is linked to an issue which divides researchers in second language acquisition into two camps, namely whether consciousness has a role to play in second language learning or not. Schmidt (1990), after summarizing recent psychological research and theory on the topic of consciousness, highlights the differences between current mainstream cognitive psychology, which "frequently claims that learning without awareness is impossible", and a fairly dominant group in second language acquisition influenced by Chomsky, for whom

> it is virtually an article of faith that what is acquired in an implicit (i.e.unconscious) mental grammar is most clearly reflected in learner intuitions about sentences, less directly in learner performance, and least directly in learners' conscious beliefs and statements about their use of the language. (Schmidt, 1990:130)

The study presented here obviously rests on a belief that consciousness plays a part in instructed second language acquisition. Much more research into what learners are conscious of as they learn a second language has to be done; the research methods have to be appropriate and it seems doubtful that one can presume to have access to learners' perceptions of the world without the learners' participation.

Interviews with pupils

The design of the investigation had to satisfy the teacher that the process in itself could also be of use to the learners; providing time for individual sessions with a teacher was considered as such, in a school context where normally one-to-one exchanges in class take place under pressing time constraints and the requirement of responding to group demands. So the interviews were both an appropriate way of conducting remedial sessions with the pupils and a way of researching into foreign-language learning in a school environment.

The one-to-one sessions took place after school and lasted up to 45 minutes; the time depended entirely on the pupil's response and was completely unpredictable. The pupils who took part were in the top set of Year 10 (age 15). They had been learning French for four years. Oral interviews were chosen as the most flexible method of collecting data and the teacher-interviewer had to adopt as non-intervening a role as possible so that her preconceived interpretation of the mistake, when there was one, would not impinge on the account given by the pupil. The interviews were held several days after the piece of writing was done. Some interviews were much more productive than others, with most of the data being provided by 6 pupils.

The mistakes which were discussed came from written compositions of approximately 120 words describing a set of pictures narrating a story. The task was a normal class exercise. In this particular investigation it was crucial that the learners should comment on their own errors, not on hypothetical sentences. This decision meant that the errors to be discussed were not pre-selected. The original intention of constituting a corpus of mistakes to be analyzed quantitatively was abandoned early in the project as a consequence of the first interviews. However, filtering was achieved through a two-stage correction process (Fig.1). In the first stage all scripts were given back to the pupils, simply indicating where mistakes had been made and pupils were asked to suggest ways of correcting. In this way, a great number of mistakes were eliminated from the process, particularly mistakes in gender and in agreement. Also mistakes which were "non-systematic errors" in Corder's sense (1967: 166) could be eliminated by the pupil's first correction. Pupils who had the most unresolved errors were asked to stay after school for a remedial session which was tape recorded.

Fig. 1: A model of the processing of the mistakes

First step:
- Teacher intervenes and underlines the mistakes.
- Pupil corrects mistakes if able to.

Consequences
1. Errors which are "lapses" are put right.
2. Errors such as gender errors are corrected. ("either ... or": binary choice)
3. Some corrected errors are still wrong.
4. Some errors are partially corrected.
5. Some errors remain uncorrected.

Second step:
- Correction emerges from the teacher/pupil interaction. The interview deals with uncorrected or wrongly corrected errors.

a/ Teacher is perplexed from the start and discovers the path taken by the pupil.

b/ Teacher suspects the nature of the error
- this is confirmed by the interview
- the assumption is disproved by the interview.

c/ Pupil cannot be guided to the correct form. Teacher supplies the form to the learner.

Results

The mistakes which formed the core of the interviews were:

- Mistakes in verb tenses, either the use of an inappropriate tense or incorrect verb forms.
- Mistakes in the use of direct and indirect object pronouns.
- Mistakes related to the use of the apostrophe.

Each of these mistakes had an impact on my awareness of the problem faced by the pupil and had various consequences.

1 Problems with past tenses

Example 1

1a: *ils ont trempé* (They are soaked).
1b: *ils ont étonné* (They are surprised).

Out of context, the correct form of the two sentences above would be, respectively, *ils sont trempés* and *ils sont étonnés*. A possible diagnosis could simply be the misspelling of *ils sont*, confused with *ils ont* because of the liaison of the *s* of *ils* with the vowel *o*. In many instances this diagnosis would be correct. However, the context of the narrative required a past tense; the correct phrases should have been: *ils étaient trempés* (They were soaked) and *ils étaient étonnés* (They were surprised). Talking to the pupil revealed that she wanted to use a past tense and had chosen the perfect tense, probably because it was the most readily available. Therefore, to interpret this mistake primarily as a confusion between the auxiliary verbs *ont* and *sont* is wrong in terms of interlanguage description in this particular instance. The adjectival function of the past participle and the consequent need for the verb *être* has escaped the notice of the pupil as well as the need for an imperfect.

Example 2

il a debout (He is standing).
Presumed correct form: *il est debout*.

Again a frequent diagnosis of this mistake is, as above, a confusion between the auxiliary verbs *a* (i.e. *avoir* - to have) and *est* (i.e *être* - to be), often traced back to a cross-linguistic influence: English learners phonetically associating the letter *a* with the English sound /ei/. But the pupil said that she was trying to make a perfect, hence the use of the auxiliary verb: *a* (has). This was confirmed by her response when I then asked her what the present tense would be, and she said *il debout*. There was no doubt, then, that she felt *debout* was a verb. The context in fact required a past tense, in this case an imperfect tense: *il était debout* (he was standing). There had indeed been an attempt at using a past tense, in this instance a perfect tense, although this was not how I had interpreted the mistake initially since the form used presented itself as a present tense.

Example 3

> *Le château avait construit au 16ième siècle.* (The castle was built in 16th century)
> Correct sentence: *Le château a été construit au 16ième siècle.*

Ten out of the 16 pupils had been unable to say *"il a été construit"* for *"it was built"*. Forms offered varied from a "passé composé" *(il a construit)* to a pluperfect *(il avait construit)*, an imperfect *(il construisait)* and an imperfect passive *(il était construit)*. The teaching difficulty was to show without using any complex grammatical terminology that *was* should not be translated by *était* but *a été*. The only way was to restore the sentence to its active form and then transform it into a passive form:

1. *On a construit ce château au seizième siècle.*
2. *Ce château a été construit au seizième siècle.*

This mistake led me to produce, for my own use not for the pupils, comparative diagrams of the passive voice in French and in English, which clarified from a teaching perspective a very complicated aspect of the two languages (Chambers, 1987: 140-145).

2 Problems with the notion of future events

The same pupil produced two sentences in which she failed to find the appropriate language forms to convey a future intent although the interview revealed that she had some knowledge of the French future tense and its morphology.

Example 4

> *Volonté Simone ton amie aller avec ta famille* (Will your friend Simone go with your family?)
> The target language sentence is: *Est-ce que Simone ira avec ta famille?*

When asked why she had used the word "volonté" (a noun not a verb), the pupil said: "I don't know why I used that, I looked it up in the dictionary. I could not think how to say 'will', so I looked it up". An ill-informed use of the dictionary and certainly an obvious and common phenomenon; but beyond that, what is significant is the lack of awareness of a need for a future form.

The interview shows the slow process involved in bringing about an awareness of the future, as well as the structure of an interrogative sentence. During the interview it is established that the pupil remembers the future of a regular verb (*manger*: to eat) and an irregular one (*venir*: to come), possibly as unanalysed chunks of language taught two years previously.

Example 5

> *Ma parents sont alle de donner moi* .... (My parents are going to give me ....)
> The target language sentence should be: *Mes parents vont me donner* ....

This sentence was produced by the same pupil as Example 4. This, at a literal level, follows the English word order: My parents are going to give me .... The pupil's first correction had produced: *Mes parents aller me donne* ....

During the interview it became apparent that the pupil was groping towards the use of the future tense, that she had some notion of the need to use "an ending" but seemed to think that the verb to be put in the future was "aller". The preceding mistake discussed just prior to this one may also have impinged on her mind. Giving the same name to an English and a French tense clearly acts as a hindrance in this case. The naming assumes that we have equivalence when clearly it is not the case. A bridge is introduced by the phrase "future tense" which is not appropriate to the English language:

I will come = Future tense = *Je viendrai*

This equation hides the dissimilarity which is even greater in the interrogative sentence:

Will you come? = *Est-ce que | tu viendr-as?*

James (1980) draws attention to the danger of being misled by such words: "The labels *tense* or *article* to refer to a certain grammatical category in two different languages should not be taken to mean that we are talking about the same thing."

3 Mistakes in the use of object pronouns

The choice of the appropriate object pronoun and its positioning in the sentence is an area well known to teachers for the difficulty it presents to English pupils

learning French. The use of *lui* instead of *le* is familiar to teachers, and although one may easily demonstrate the mechanism by which a noun is replaced by a pronoun if one uses examples in French, the production process for a pupil starting from English as L1 is complicated.

Two pupils produced mistakes which puzzled me and which had something in common as was revealed in the course of the interview:

Example 6

Pupil A: *Ils regardaient t'il* (They were looking at him)
Correct sentence: *Ils le regardaient*
Pupil B: *Ils ont dit a-t-il* (They told him)
Correct sentence: *Ils lui ont dit*

From a target language viewpoint, both mistakes analyzed grammatically appear extremely peculiar and, encountered separately, one might fail to see a similarity at first. In the course of the interviews I discovered that Pupil A had used *t'* because of its similarity with *to* and that Pupil B thought that *a-t-il* (English: has he) meant *to him*. The absence of the accent on *a* made it more difficult to interpret the mistake. The letter "t" in both mistakes is close to the English "to" or "at" but the cross-linguistic influence is strictly at the spelling level; meaning or function of the preposition do not intervene. In the case of *a-t-il* a whole unanalysed chunk is used.

A third mistake (Pupil C) was less unusual:

Example 7

Les voisins ont lui regarde (The neighbours looked at him)
Correct sentence: *Les voisins l'ont regardé.*

In this case *lui* was used when *le* was required; there was an attempt at placing the pronoun before the verb although that was not successful. It appears that Pupil C is more aware, grammatically, than the other two because, if the verb *to look at* had a French equivalent requiring an indirect object pronoun, the choice of *lui* might appear judicious. However, Pupil C did not seem to be aware of the direct object pronoun *le*; her response was that *him* =*lui*, which of course is true in some contexts.

These three mistakes revealed a common feature, which was the automatic translation of *him* by *il* or *lui*. Pupils said: "Him is lui" or "to him is a-t-il" without any awareness of the grammatical function of the words, although the pronouns had been taught explicitly in the previous year. A systematic study of the acquisition of such pronouns would be required to establish how frequently the assumption *him=lui* is made and why.

4 Various mistakes in the use of the apostrophe

Teachers, I think, are familiar with the following examples:

Example 8

Learner language	*qu'est*
Target language	*qui est* (English: which is)

Example 9

Learner language	*m'amie*
Target language	*mon amie* (English: my friend)

Example 10

Learner language	*c'enfant*
Target language	*cet enfant* (English: this child)

In these 3 instances, it appears that a vowel (either *i*, *e* or *a*) has been dropped in front of another vowel. In Example 8, I had assumed that *qu'* stood for *que* and had started explaining that *qui* should have been used; the pupil was adamant that he had intended to use *qui* not *que;* the exchange showed that we were talking at cross purposes. In my mind I had automatically restored *qu'* to *que* and assumed that the pupil was confusing the subject relative pronoun *qui*, with the object relative pronoun *que*. In Example 9, the *m'* is intended by the pupil to stand for *ma* and in Example 10, *c'* stands for *ce*. It seems clear that a rule which requires us to drop the vowels 'e' or 'a' of the definite articles or personal pronouns *le* and *la* in front of another vowel has been extended and generalised. In Examples 9 and 10, the French language adopts different solutions. In Example 9 it requires the use of a masculine possessive adjective in front of a feminine noun and in example 10, there are two forms for the demonstrative adjective *ce* or *cet;* however the forms *m'* and *c'* do exist respectively as personal and demonstrative pronouns. As for Example 8, the elision of the vowel *i* is less predictable since it is not a general

rule; there is elision of t' + *i* of *si* (English: if) only in front of *il/ils* but not in front of other words with an initial *i*. The misinterpretation of the mistake by the teacher on this occasion suggests an inappropriate explanation and also makes the mistake appear more serious than it is.

The examples of the misuse of the apostrophe show an extension of a rule which was intended for the definite article *le* and *la* (or the direct object pronoun) in front of a vowel. The grammatical function of the word on which the elision of a vowel is carried out is essential. But if pupils are not taught or fail to realise this, then the rules concerning elision of the vowels *e* and *a* appear inconsistent. How can one account for *ce* becoming *cet* in front of a noun starting with a vowel? These examples raise the whole issue of grammatical awareness and how teachers encourage it. On several occasions during the interviews the avoidance of grammatical terminology and explanation meant that teacher and pupil worked on examples and often returned to the sentences learnt at the beginner's stage in an effort to establish a link between the chunks of language taught at an earlier stage and the sentences analyzed. This link seemed to be the crucial process that the learner was unable to build by herself.

Discussion and conclusions

Objections to qualitative studies are often raised by those who argue that one cannot generalise the results. The evidence provided by interviews with 7 pupils does not permit us to say whether the explanations given by the pupils are strictly individual accounts or common to many. However, this does raise doubts about the description of mistakes from a target language viewpoint. For instance, in Example 9 above, to describe in this case *m'* as the personal pronoun *me* when what was intended was the possessive adjective (*ma*) is wrong in interlanguage terms. Familiarity with the target language can be a hindrance in an investigation of learners' language, both for the researcher and the teacher. A researcher collecting mistakes may classify them according to the grammatical categories of the target language although, for some mistakes at least, this procedure will not be appropriate and may hide the different routes taken by individual learners. The comparative stance which is developed through a knowledge of both L1 and L2 is to be avoided if one is trying to apprehend a mistake without preconception; this is particularly difficult for linguists who are conversant with both L1 and L2. For instance, the use of the word "omission" to describe a mistake is a good example of the

misleading effect of a comparative approach. To translate the past tense "I prepared", English pupils frequently write *je préparé* instead of *j'ai préparé*. Teachers describe this as the omission of the auxiliary verb, which is a valid description in terms of the foreign language grammar. However, as there is no morphological differentiation in English between the past participle and the past tense form of regular verbs, the *-é* ending might be generalised by the learner as having the same value as "-ed" in English. So the word "omission" is an example of the dangers of what Bley-Vroman (1983:2) called "the comparative fallacy" and of the effects it can have on the investigation of interlanguage. Rutherford also draws attention to the "opportunities for misanalysis of interlanguage syntax" from the target language perspective (1984:135 and 1987:20). The danger is clearly demonstrated in this study with consequences for the teacher and the researcher, who have to be ready to listen and not anticipate with an explanation which does not match the pupil's misunderstanding.

One of the crucial consequences of interviewing pupils on their work was to alter my approach to mistakes and adopt a more cautious approach in my interpretations of them. The experience certainly was a consciousness-raising exercise for the teacher, although it was originally planned to help the learners with no anticipation of the effect on the teacher. The effectiveness and appropriateness of collective error-correction as a classroom practice is seriously in doubt in many cases. Individual remedial sessions allow a better resolution of the difficulty; this may appear a very time-consuming solution but in reality only few mistakes require an extensive unravelling. The practice of a first correction carried out by the learner on the simple indication that a mistake has been made allows a selection of the problem areas which cannot be decided on *a priori* by the teacher and considerably reduces the variety of mistakes. This process selects the mistakes which need attention.

What value should one attach to a single event which uncovers a mistaken interpretation? Should it be discarded as an exception? How can we assume it is an exception? In terms of perception, the realisation that one has made a false interpretation is an experience which an honest researcher or teacher cannot ignore. The doubt which is thrown on our preconceptions should alter the way we look at mistakes; that in itself becomes a general principle. The experience increases our awareness of the complexity and variety by which learners arrive at some language forms. Having also witnessed the fact that

the same language form can be arrived at by different processes we become less confident in our ability to attempt a classification of errors.

The study was intended to be exploratory. It was limited in its scope. It must also be remembered that the filtering of mistakes produced the selection discussed in the interviews and therefore represents a small proportion of the mistakes produced by the pupils. However, from a pedagogical point of view these are the very mistakes (those which cannot be corrected by the pupil or which puzzle the teacher) which are most problematic, since there is lack of understanding or inability to proceed to a correct form.

The insights gained through the experience at least show how difficult it is for a teacher or a researcher who knows the target language well to see with the eyes of the learner, and yet, without the awareness of the difference in perception, the pedagogical dialogue runs the risk of mutual incomprehension. As for studies of learner language, it seems that learners' accounts could provide some useful insights into their views of language. Studies similar to this one could extend our perception of the learner's language awareness.

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CROCODILE DUNDEE MEETS HIS MATCH IN URDU: BRIXTON PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN SHAPE A MULTILINGUAL CULTURE

Charmian Kenner

As part of a research project on language awareness in multilingual primary school classrooms, I worked with nine to ten year olds in Brixton, South London, to develop roleplays and make comic books in different languages. One of my aims was to find out whether such work would help to increase metalinguistic understanding, and in a report on the project (Kenner, 1993) I describe how the children began to discuss the detailed structure of the languages involved. However, they were equally concerned with wider aspects of communication, and in this paper I would like to speculate further on how new forms of discourse seemed to emerge through the multilingual activities, and seemed likely to contribute to change in an already dynamic classroom culture.

The need to develop multilingual practices

Within most inner city schools, there are a number of children who are bilingual, and classes therefore have the potential to be multilingual. Yet it is rare for these languages actually to be used in the classroom. If they are, it tends to be by the bilingual children only, as some kind of demonstration, without their classmates participating in the experience. Multicultural events are often encouraged, such as the celebration of festivals, and this occasionally involves some use of language: for example, writing in Chinese for Chinese New Year. Yet, essentially, children have to leave their home language outside the classroom when they step over the threshold. Educationalists who believe in a strong link between language and culture can only surmise that a vital part of bilingual children's identity is being suppressed within the classroom. Other children too may experience constraints on identity within the limited confines of official school culture, which remains resolutely monolingual, based on Standard English.

I would suggest that this situation can perhaps be changed through the participation of all children in new practices, in which they are given the opportunity to speak and write in a number of languages, including each

other's and their own. It is this concrete experience of creating a multilingual discourse together which can change the balance of social relationships, and enable children to explore a range of identities.

Theories of language and culture

In reflecting on the possibilities which multilingual practices could open up, I have drawn on Volosinov's work on the philosophy of language. He suggests that difference is a spur to communication; when languages meet, 'linguistic crossing' can result (Volosinov, 1986, p.19). He also talks of the 'multiaccentuality of the sign': different social groups will offer different interpretations of the same sign, and this intersecting of accents gives the sign its 'vitality and dynamism and the capacity for further development' (Volosinov, 1986, p.23). As language develops into new paths, new cultural forms are created, and there is a constant interaction between linguistic and cultural change.

Ben Rampton has looked at language crossing within mixed race groups of white, Afro-Caribbean and Asian young people, analysing the development of 'interracial Panjabi' to explore and deal with difference, and to develop an oppositional culture to that of Standard English (Rampton, 1991). This research took place largely in the playground and in youth clubs, and the question arises as to whether similar effects could occur if children have the chance to use languages more freely in the classroom.

Vygotsky's ideas on children's language development indicate that the path of learning is likely to be affected by the cultural context in which it occurs, and particularly by the social relationships involved. Perhaps, therefore, existing constraints on language use mean that the educational potential of multilingual classrooms remains largely unexplored as yet. The work of Burgess and Hardcastle (1991) in secondary English teaching shows how, if young people can be encouraged to draw on genres from their specific cultural background, new types of narrative can be produced as a result. In my own research, children were able to experiment with different languages as well as with genre, and I shall suggest that these two areas of exploration interacted in particular ways, often with unexpected results.

The roleplay project

The whole class worked in groups of three, each led by a bilingual child, to devise a doctor-patient dialogue in that child's language, which they then performed for the rest of the class, who tried to guess from context and gestures what was being said. My original intention was to provide the conditions under which children might produce a roughly similar dialogue in, for example, Somali, Spanish and Urdu, and then to see whether children could compare some of the utterances, and notice differences in linguistic structure. Since I would argue that multilingual practices need to be grounded in social interactions which will enable children to produce meaningful language for their own purposes, I had chosen the doctor-patient roleplay as a communicative setting which also fitted in with the class topic, 'The Body'.

The activity proved even more popular than I had hoped, but, far from generating a set of similar dialogues, the children produced an enormous variety of scenarios and utterances. Storylines ranged from the dramatic helicopter rescue of a mountain climber with a broken leg, conducted in Spanish, to the extraction of a pair of classroom scissors apparently embedded in the neck of a patient who was crying out in Chinese. The children took up the doctor-patient genre with enthusiasm, exploring the power dimensions in what is perhaps the ultimate discourse of authority. Everyone wanted to be the doctor, and in several cases this role was played by the bilingual child, who tended to take the lead in the activity.

Roleplays were developed in six languages (Somali, Spanish, Chinese, Urdu, Gujerati, and Sierra Leone Creole). Once the children had grasped that they should all speak their group's language, rather than only the bilingual child doing so, they began to create a dialogue involving whole utterances. Most children were speaking another language for the first time, and learning it from bilingual classmates, who themselves were often breaking new ground by using their own language in the classroom. When the roleplays were performed for the whole class, this novel situation seemed to produce an atmosphere of excitement and mutual respect. The bilingual children displayed a heightened self-confidence, whilst their peers had to take the risk of trying out unfamiliar phrases. Through the public use of different languages by all members of the class, these languages seemed to assume a new dimension, a right to be there. This effect was intensified when, a few weeks later, the class

repeated their roleplays as a coherent group presentation to an attentive audience at an all-school assembly.

I shall now consider in more detail how two of the roleplay groups dealt with aspects of genre and multilingualism. In the first case, Mathew, whose background is Irish, and Akeil, who is Afro-Caribbean, engaged in a mock judo fight in Somali. Akeil appeared to get hurt, and for help, the two boys were dependent on Amina, the Somali speaker, who was also the doctor. Their dependence on her was two-fold; firstly, on her role in the dialogue, since she was the powerful person who answered the emergency call and put on the bandages, and secondly, on her linguistic resources, since she could teach them Somali. Both of these aspects altered the more common dynamic between bilingual children and their peers, and, in this case, also between girls and boys. Amina, who was usually quiet and shy, became the central force within the group.

The roleplay developed by Mousir, Angharad and Nathan seemed to show a complexity of approach to both genre and multilingualism. They decided to each use a different language, so Mousir spoke his home language of Urdu, Angharad spoke in 'Welsh English' (her parents come from Wales), and Nathan spoke in 'Australian English' (he has visited family in Australia). Performers and audience appeared to accept that communication was possible when three languages were being used simultaneously: a novel assumption which perhaps reflected a certain openness to the possibility of linguistic crossing.

The scenario was presented as follows : Nathan, as the patient, stumbled into the surgery, obviously drunk, and said loudly 'G'day mate!' The audience laughed in recognition; Crocodile Dundee, as the Australian outback character who took on inner-city New York, was a popular figure in playground culture at the time. Angharad and Mousir, as the doctors, tried to examine Nathan, but he resisted, to comic effect; finally, Mousir gave him an 'injection' to calm him down. Angharad and Mousir then manoeuvred their patient onto a table and put on rubber gloves to perform a 'brain-change' operation (the 'brain' being represented by a fluorescent yellow tennis ball). During the operation, the doctors spoke to each other in Urdu.

In analysing this performance, I would suggest that the Australian character's extravagant language and behaviour were being used to undermine the highly formal atmosphere associated with a doctor's surgery, which is based on 'polite'

interaction, controlled by the doctor in Standard English. The children's laughter may have showed identification with this challenge to authority; they, of course, would have experienced only the patient's role in real life. They may also have appreciated the opportunity to see a playground character taking centre stage in the classroom; their own playground language can be oppositional, a way of dealing with the disparity in power between children and adults, but is not normally used in class. Mousir and Angharad's response to their patient's insubordination involved the use of Urdu, which could be seen here as becoming a powerful discourse, known to these two children, but unknown to the patient or audience, perhaps adding to the sense of mystery which often surrounds the pronouncements of the medical profession.

Thus the children seemed to exploit the interplay between different languages to firstly disrupt the power relations of the typical doctor-patient discourse, and then to take over the powerful role for themselves. The patient, however, was allowed to win out in the end; Nathan made a remarkable recovery from the operation, and his first words were (still in 'Australian') 'Where's my beer?'

The comic book project

Like the roleplays, this was initially designed to stimulate children to look at linguistic structure. Three children - Vishal, who speaks Hindi, Maggie, whose family is Chinese, and Peter, a mixed-race child - worked together to make Hindi, Spanish and French versions of a 'Minnie the Minx' cartoon from *The Beano*. Each book was in the form of a reading game, to be played by their classmates, who would first need to guess what the cartoon characters might be saying, and then find the answer in English, concealed elsewhere on the page or at the back of the book.

As with the roleplay work, the comic books seemed to become the spur for new forms of social interaction as well as being a vehicle for metalinguistic discussion, and again, I identified an interweaving between genre and the use of different languages. In contrast to medical discourse, comic books could be said to be very much the children's own genre, and indeed I suggested the idea for this reason, speculating that it would heighten involvement in the activity. All the children displayed a certain excitement at the chance to work with comics in class, since they were normally restricted to break-time reading. Bilingual children seemed to share in the familiarity with comic book culture,

which has a strong connection with the playground language which young learners of English seem to pick up so quickly. Vishal, for example, was particularly adept at creating pieces of dialogue in English for the 'Minnie the Minx' story, and his peers showed their appreciation of his sophisticated wordplay.

The use of this genre thus gave all children, including those who were bilingual, the chance to express common aspects of social identity within the classroom. As the work progressed, Vishal was able to feed his language into the comic book genre to make a new cultural product. 'Minnie the Minx', re-made in Hindi, looked both familiar and unfamiliar to the reader, and attracted considerable interest from his classmates.

The children's experience of reading and writing in Hindi whilst producing and using the book seemed to alter their relationship to the language and to each other. Vishal could speak Hindi fluently, but was initially less confident about writing it, so he needed to ask his mother to provide a translation of the English dialogue for the comic book story. The following tapescript extract, recorded whilst he was copying his mother's writing into the comic strip, shows a growing sense of enjoyment and satisfaction.

Charmian: Have you practised your writing before?

Vishal: Yeah - you know I used to go classes, but I didn't like the teacher, so I left it.

Charmian: How old were you?

Vishal: Oh, about seven, I still remember - I've still got my books, the Hindi book it's got ABCD. I'll bring them if I can still find them.

Later :

Charmian: When you feel tired of doing the writing, then you can switch and do something else.

Vishal: No I don't think I can get tired doing the writing, it's fun. I wrote ten minutes, it's two words!

Vishal's pride in his writing was increased when Nathan, who is Afro-Caribbean, began to look at the Hindi script in the comic book, and immediately asked 'Who drew that?' Deciding to try out Hindi for himself, Nathan began to copy a phrase from a dual language story book. The physical and mental

challenge of producing this new written form led him to place a high value on the language and on the people who could write it. Meanwhile, his discussion with Vishal enabled the latter to re-evaluate the idea of Hindi classes.

Nathan: The easiest thing is, drawing the first letter and doing the line...(to Vishal) your mum must be really good, 'cause the thing what's hard about this, is getting the thing straight!

Vishal: You know my mother, she knows English writing and Indian.

Charmian: Yes, that's pretty clever, isn't it.

Nathan: Vishal, was you born in India?

Vishal: No, I was born in England.

Nathan: You weren't born in there? That's why you can't talk it so good, isn't it?

Vishal: Yeah, my mum was born in there, so she can do it.

Nathan: You should learn it.

Vishal: Yeah I am, I'm going to classes.

Vishal and Nathan went on to create new language together, when Nathan asked for help to write something for his own purposes:

Nathan: Has anyone got a dictionary in Hindi? 'Cause I could have writ my name in Hindi.

Vishal: That'll be 'Nathan Thompson' still.

Charmian: But it would be in different writing wouldn't it?

Vishal: Yeah - it'd be a different 'N'. (shortly afterwards) Can I try? I'll just try something... N-A-T-H- (writing in Hindi).... I think that's how you spell Nathan.

Nathan: Do you really think so?

Vishal: Yeah - that bit there, that's the N, that's the A.

Nathan: So I can write that down here.

Vishal may have produced his own version of Hindi writing here, rather than the standard script. This could be seen as a form of linguistic crossing, arising from a communicative encounter between the two children.

Nathan expressed the desire to continue working with Hindi :

Nathan: Hey Vish, after this, maybe we should study some of the words, like try and do the alphabet.

Vishal: Alphabet I can do, just a bit.

Nathan: And then we could write it out.

Meanwhile, Tania, an Afro-Caribbean girl who was reading the comic book at the same time, also became interested in Hindi, and both she and Nathan commented on extending the activity further.

Nathan: (pointing to what he has copied out) It's funny - looks like a little bit, but... if you learnt to write this in school now, you'd get into trouble every day, 'cause it's so long.

Tania: Imagine if you kept writing that every day and started getting good at it, and started writing it instead of writing English....

It seems that Nathan and Tania, like the children who participated in the roleplays, experienced aspects of difference through speaking and writing other languages, and entered into their bilingual classmates' world on new terms. Tania did not continue with the idea, but she may have been wondering what a classroom with a multilingual discourse would be like. Her reaction can lead us to speculate as to whether a sustained programme of multilingual practices could be set up in primary schools, and if so, what new linguistic and cultural forms might result.

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LITERACY, VALUES AND NON-LITERARY TEXTS

Andrew Hart

Introduction

Debates about the role of the mass media in the cultural and social lives of the young have raged intensely during the last decade. Most recently, the importance of studying the media has also featured prominently in the long-standing conflict over the content of English in the National Curriculum. Opponents of Media Education have focused on the need for an allegedly value-free 'back-to-basics' English curriculum, while its supporters have called for the study of a broad range of literary and media texts as proper objects of study, rather than a prescriptive literary canon. They also call for more opportunity for young people to create their own media texts through critical and practical activity.

This paper draws on recent research in English classrooms reported in earlier *CLE Occasional Papers*. It offers new evidence about the forms of Media Education currently taught by English teachers and attempts to connect the current English debate with more general concerns about values and religion in the curriculum.

The idea of studying the media in school may seem odd to many educators. At first sight, formal education and the mass media have little in common. They represent quite different sets of cultural, aesthetic and social values. According to this view, the only space that schools might give to the media would be to defend their students against media values. As one of the earliest English cultural writers to consider the issues put it:

> Everything acquired at school in the way of aesthetic and moral training is contradicted and attacked by the entertainment industry ... The aim (of schools) is to provide standards against which the offerings of the mass media will appear cut down to size. (Thompson 1964: 17-20)

Yet the Report of the Cox Committee (DES 1989) gave study of media a welcome public prominence. Media Education is seen by Cox as part of "the exploration of contemporary culture" (9.4). It is recognized that Media Education approaches should be part of every English teacher's practice, that "the kinds of question that are routinely applied in Media Education can fruitfully be

applied to literature" (7.23) and that "Media Education has often developed in a very explicit way concepts which are of general importance in English" (9.9). What are these questions and concepts? The main ones are helpfully listed by Cox as "selection (of information, viewpoint, etc.), editing, author, audience, medium, genre, stereotype, etc."(9.9). The questions resolve themselves into "who is communicating with whom and why; how has the text been produced and transmitted; how does it convey its meaning?" (7.23). If made operational, these questions would produce a form of understanding which would fit exactly the definition of media literacy produced by a recent Aspen Institute Conference: "the ability of a citizen to access, analyze, and produce information for specific outcomes" (Aufderheide 1993: v).

Media Education is also seen by the Cox Report as closely related to Information Technology. This is a promising conjunction, provided that we do not mistakenly identify Information Technology as limited to the use of computers. We need to focus on a range of technologies which are used to collect, organise, process and circulate information. This focus is by no means new and it is therefore useful to look at recent developments in teaching about information in the media.

Study of the media has grown in popularity in English secondary schools at least since the 1960s. The main impetus for this growth came from teachers of English, many of whom saw themselves as protectors of children from the 'false consciousness' that the media were believed to inculcate. It was this invasion of consciousness which Marshall McLuhan perceived in the 1960s. He saw education as a form of "civil defense" against "media fall-out" (McLuhan 1973: 208). Worryingly, he saw the invasion as a subliminal one, operating beneath the threshold of consciousness. In a famous phrase, he warned that the content of the media was "like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind" (McLuhan 1973: 26). This fear of the seduction of the innocent was to dominate the early years of studying the mass media.

In the 1970s and 80s, Media Education grew rapidly, with the creation of new secondary level courses in film studies and later with new courses in Media Studies and national examinations at age 16 and 18. The availability of the VCR gave an enormous boost to media work and made the study of television the dominant focus. However, there was a tension over what kinds of texts

were legitimate objects of study - those valued by teachers or those valued by students? This tension led many teachers to examine their own attitudes in more personal, less theoretical ways, and some recognized the hypocrisy in routine condemnations of what were major sources of information and pleasure for themselves as much as for their students, especially when they formed an important part of students' cultural identities.

Although Media Education has developed rapidly, there has not been a corresponding expansion of training opportunities for teachers. The result is that many work in isolation with little more than examination syllabuses to guide them. Some have inherited responsibility for Media courses from enthusiastic teachers who have moved on. Although some of these 'substitutes' often become enthusiasts themselves, they can too easily find themselves overwhelmed by the scope of the subject and by the unlimited material from which to choose.

Because few teachers have been formally trained in Media Education or Media Studies, there is inevitably a wide variation in theoretical understanding and classroom practice. Notions of Media Education may vary from showing a video recording of a Shakespeare play to the critical study of media institutions and audiences. Some teachers have rejected analytical approaches in favour of creative or technical ones. Others justify the subject for its method alone, arguing, for example, that its emphasis on group work and projects develops social skills.

But, in spite of the diversity of aims and approaches, the importance of systematic Media Education is at last a formally recognized National Curriculum responsibility for English teachers. The most recent starting-points for Media teaching are based on 'Key Concepts' or 'Signpost Questions' (see Figure 1) which enable a holistic cross-media perspective. These conceptual approaches offer the benefit of a robust but flexible framework, but in their attempts to maintain a form of neutrality, they risk abandoning the high ground of moral and spiritual reflection. They are designed to provoke questions about values and ideology, but unfortunately do not guarantee that they will actually do so.

SIGNPOST QUESTIONS

WHO is communicating with whom?	**AGENCIES**
WHAT type of text is it?	**CATEGORIES**
HOW is it produced?	**TECHNOLOGIES**
HOW do we know what it means?	**LANGUAGES**
WHO receives it and what sense do they make of it?	**AUDIENCES**
HOW does it present its subject?	**REPRESENTATIONS**

Figure 1 (after Bazalgette, C. (Ed.) 1989: 8)

Recent research carried out in the School of Education on the kinds of media work undertaken by English teachers shows a wide range of approaches to classroom work and a desire to relate learning to 'real' activities (Hart 1991; Hart and Benson 1992, 1993a, 1993b). The aim of the *Models of Media Education Project* was to illuminate some of the continuities and differences in Media teaching styles of a small group of secondary English teachers. We wanted to explore their perception of Media Education in an English context and to discover how they saw Media work relating to the other responsibilities of English Departments. We also tried to document some of the perceived problems and rewards of teaching and learning about the media. We explored teachers' attitudes to Media Education both as a theoretical discipline and as a classroom subject; their aims for their students; the experience they brought to the work; the key concepts with which they felt most confident and the sources from which their understanding of these concepts derived; their favoured resources and the ways in which these are used; and their expectations for the future of Media Education.

Media teachers

The range of experience of the teachers interviewed was impressive. Most had wide and varied teaching experience, usually involving subjects other than English, and several had business or industrial backgrounds prior to teaching. Surprisingly, there was very little evidence of any professional experience of the media or of active engagement.

They were generally disposed to accept new challenges and inclined to see English as a subject embracing the whole field of communication. Even so, their involvement with media teaching was sometimes patchy and determined more by accident than by conscious pursuit of a career option. Eight of the eleven interviewed had taught for at least ten years and in some cases for more than twenty. None of these had any extended training in Media Education but they had often approached the subject from an interest in Literature and a shifting awareness of literary theory towards ideas that place reader response and a recognition that readers would benefit from reading a range of texts at the centre of their approach. The other three teachers, two of whom were in their probationary year, had deliberately chosen training courses with a Media or Communications content. All of the teachers saw the need for further training in a subject they recognized as changing in its concepts and methods, and all valued the work of county advisers and other training agencies. Most of them believed that Media Education should be a part of students' education throughout their secondary education and possibly before. There was very little anxiety about the subject proliferating into other disciplines and most felt secure about their own contributions to any cross-curricular initiatives. On the other hand, none of the schools concerned had yet developed a school policy for Media Education and in some cases the teachers interviewed proved to be unaware of Media work being done in other departments. Some expressed anxiety about attitudes of colleagues in their own departments and feared some disapproval of what was sometimes seen as the study of ephemera.

They tended to express their aims in terms of helping students to make up their own minds by recognising that media texts are constructions representing particular points of view. Most of the teachers spoke enthusiastically of the response of their students to Media work. They often expressed surprise at the insights they had been able to gain into their students' perceptions and

preferred modes of working. Students who were difficult to motivate often showed new strengths. Many classes were directly concerned with cultural and social issues. Questions were constantly asked about the value of particular media texts and about the values which the texts were based on. In the process of evaluating texts, students were able to articulate a range of possible meanings and to relate their own values to others'.

Information and values

Given the potential of Media Education for teaching about values and the evident classroom successes highlighted by research, we would expect that Media Education would be embraced with enthusiasm by politicians and educational administrators. The recent Discussion Paper on *Spiritual and Moral Development* (NCC 1993) spells out in some detail the main constituents and the expected outcomes. It describes spiritual development as motivated by a search for meaning and purpose in relation to challenging life-experiences and involving the growth of self-awareness and responsibility for one's own experience and identity; the development of self-respect; recognition of the worth of others and the importance of relationships; the importance of compassion, of imaginative engagement with experience and of creative activity. Moral development is seen as based on a conscious will to behave in a morally principled way in the context of agreed social codes and conventions. It expresses itself in the making of reasoned and responsible decisions.

These descriptions of spiritual and moral characteristics may leave gaps and may not command universal assent, but the difficulty they raise is not so much ethical or philosophical as educational and pedagogical. For unfortunately the paper has nothing to say about curriculum change or classroom methods.

An important opportunity for genuine learning is being missed. Most of the goals of spiritual and moral development could be effectively reached through Media Education. But educational policy seems to be going in the opposite direction. In spite of the evident potential of Media Education in this area of values education, the Government has further reduced its potential by imposing a radical change in the process of teacher training. The most successful form of initial training, the intensive one-year post-graduate course for Secondary School subject specialists, has recently produced many English teachers with specialist training in Media Education. But the new system

announced by the Government in 1992 effectively abolishes University control of such courses by insisting that each student spends a minimum of **two thirds** of their time in schools. The likely result of this for Media Education, as for other innovative subjects, is that it will suffer because the experience and expertise of supervising students in Media Education is rarely available in schools at present.

This official neglect of Media Education may be because there remains great hostility from some politicians towards the mass media and towards television in particular. As in the 1960s, the media are still seen as the sources of moral and spiritual degeneration and blamed for social and cultural disintegration. For example, Kenneth Baker, who was one of the main architects of the National Curriculum as Secretary of State for Education, attacked television watching as the enemy of imaginative engagement in a short article in the *Sunday Times* (1988). Children, he argues, have an inner life which needs to tapped by teachers. He quotes the poet Ted Hughes on the "world of final reality, the world of memory, emotion, imagination, intelligence and natural common sense, which goes on all the time, consciously or unconsciously, like the heart-beat". His model of English teaching is based on the idea of cultural heritage. He wants children to be taught the literary classics.

> When I visit schools, I like to call in on English lessons and am particularly pleased if the children are being taught one of the classics. I believe passionately that the future of our language depends upon us bringing up children to appreciate its past.

He sees this as a powerful antidote to the effects of the mass media. He claims that watching television bypasses the imagination. It is a predominantly visual medium which makes life too easy for viewers. Only books offer readers an "engagement with language as they wrestle to create sense out of chaos and meaning out of absurdity." He concludes that "the viewer must become a reader." Here Mr. Baker's ambiguity is accidentally prophetic. Whilst we cannot agree that students should stop watching and confine themselves to reading, we can agree that the critical skills which readers bring to literary texts also need to be brought to media texts. Media texts are too important to be ignored, and understanding them may involve highly complex 'reading' skills (Hart 1992).

So, in spite of Mr. Baker's misgivings, we would expect that the latest proposal for revising the National Curriculum for English would extend the basic mandate offered in the original version. But we would be disappointed. In the introduction to the proposals at the consultation stage, the Chair of the National Curriculum Council, David Pascall, proposed merely a supporting role for Media Education "to deliver the fundamental objective of the Order, rather than...as...distinctive areas of study..." (DFE 1993). There may be as many references to media in the new proposals as in the original Order, but most of the references envisage listening tests, spoken language awareness or elaborate comprehension exercises (DFE 1994).

Media texts mainly occur only in the form of examples which can be ignored. It is possible under the new proposals to omit Media Education from English by using other kinds of examples. The strongest reference comes in the suggestion that "Pupils should be encouraged to reflect on the language of television and radio." The context implies that 'language' refers simply to words, ignoring the crucial importance of visual images in late twentieth century communication. There is a rigid insistence on the teaching of Standard English language forms and a narrow range of 'cultural heritage' texts. The important 'personal growth' and 'cultural analysis' dimensions of English teaching which were central to the original English Order have been virtually ignored in the new proposals.

The new emphasis is on outcomes rather than process, on teaching rather than learning. Both the new English proposals and the *Spiritual and Moral Development* paper seem to share a common expectation that standards are to be taught by the efforts of teachers rather than learnt through the engagement of students. The approach is didactic and expository rather than interactive and exploratory. It assumes that values are relatively static and can be transmitted unproblematically. It assumes that they need simply to be transmitted by teachers for students to imitate. For example: "Schools should be expected to uphold those values which contain moral absolutes" (NCC 1993: 4). But schools may more usefully be seen as places where many different sets of values meet, often in conflict. In a multi-cultural society, it is at best naive and at worst disingenuous. Successful learning can only come from teaching which acknowledges schools as sites of cultural struggle, where values are contested in debate and discovered through active involvement, and where

students learn about and test out values for themselves in practical classroom situations.

While the latest analytical approaches to Media Education through 'Key Concepts' may risk creating a moral and spiritual vacuum, this more authoritarian approach to defining the curriculum risks creating a pedagogical 'black hole' into which the universe of real learning may collapse.

The privatisation of pleasure and the iconography of desire: a classroom approach to media literacy

A recent advertising campaign in the UK for the French aniseed-based aperitif Pernod contains ambiguities which take us to the centre of the debate about spiritual and moral development. On the surface, it is exactly the kind of text which authoritarian educators would want to protect children from. It does not seek to engender spiritual and moral development, but rather the opposite. Yet analysing the advertisement so as to engage with the text can provide a platform for genuine learning.

The Pernod advertisement, like many others, can usefully illustrate one of the means by which spiritual and moral values can be developed in a less authoritarian way. This approach to engaging with students' values derives from French semiological theorists, especially Roland Barthes (Barthes 1967, 1973). Every text is conceived as a set of signs chosen for specific purposes and arranged in particular ways. Each sign and each text contain latent meanings at three levels: the denotative, the connotative and the ideological.

In the case of a text like this one, students would be asked to investigate and reflect individually on three questions which correspond to the three levels of meaning:

* **What can I see in the text?**
* **What thoughts and feelings does the text suggest?**
* **What values does the text assume or express?**

Other exploratory questions might be asked, in order to articulate the implied narrative surrounding the text. For example:

- **What has just happened in the picture?**
- **What is happening now?**
- **What will happen next?**
- **What thoughts/feelings are the characters experiencing?**
- **Where would I find this text?**

Sharing individual responses to these questions reveals a wide range of possibilities, but usually focuses on a consensus about a particular 'preferred' reading which is the dominant one in a given culture (Hall 1981). The questions help to create a dialogue around interpretations of the text. These interpretations will show a degree of cultural uniformity but also the particularity of individual readings. In this way, students grasp that culture is realised inside each individual, rather than being something 'outside'. In the process of engaging with texts for themselves, they are learning about making decisions and judgements of value. They are learning to be 'critically autonomous'.

The central image is a dramatically simple one. Against a dark nocturnal background, a young woman stands illuminated by a telephone and a glass of Pernod. In the corner, the brand name and the slogan integrated with it are also illuminated. The phrase ***'FREE THE SPIRIT'*** has both literal and metaphorical potential. On the literal, material level, 'spirit' means simply any distilled alcoholic liquor. Metaphorically, it suggests notions of personal liberation through the full expression of inner desire. The golden glow of the yellow drink in the foreground held by the young woman is echoed by the telephone receiver in her other hand, by the glow of the surrounding telephone booth and by the fierce brightness in the background. A burning light source is suggested in the distance. Her crucifix-like position parallels the telegraph poles which connect her with the distant perspective. She is 'dressed for action' and her physical pose suggests eagerness, and availability. The arc of bright light which connects her drink to the distance parallels the line of the telegraph wire. The function of the whole image is to suggest that the drink can act like the telephone as a form of instant communication with a social reality to which she aspires.

The validity of this reading is strengthened by other versions of the advertisement in the same series. One of these also shows a young woman

with a glass of Pernod in her hand, this time gazing at a funfair in the distance. It also features the same slogan *'FREE THE SPIRIT'*.

'Critical autonomy' can be developed further by encouraging 'negotiated' or 'oppositional' readings which deviate from or subvert the 'preferred' reading. So, for example, with the Pernod advertisement, rather than listening to the teacher trying to expose the deviousness and deceitfulness of the visual rhetoric, students would be asked to give as many affirmative answers as possible to the question:

"Why should I drink Pernod?"

This would then lead to examining the rhetorical techniques which are used to generate the answers within the text's 'preferred' reading. In order to shift away from the 'preferred' reading, we can subvert the original question and ask:

"Why *should* I drink Pernod?"

When this particular Pernod advertisement was discussed with a class of Year 10 students at a comprehensive school, nearly all of them immediately recognised (in spite of my blanking out the verbal text) that it was an advertisement which they would expect to find in a magazine or on a street hoarding. They also picked out the key features of the text with ease: specifically, the telephone, the woman, the glass, the glowing lights, the warmth of the colours and the verbal elements. One student even recognised an iconographical reference to the Statue of Liberty. Some saw the fire in the darkness as a danger or threat to the woman, but the majority saw it as an attraction for her (for example: "the way to go forward", "an opportunity", "expecting something to happen", "the freedom of this person's mind and her thoughts allowed to travel", "escaping").

In the process of answering the key questions **"Why should I drink Pernod?"** and **"Why *should* I drink Pernod?"**, the students introduced knowledge and experience from outside the text as a basis for questioning its rhetoric. They recognized and articulated ideas and values embedded in the text which give the product a social and cultural context. Although one or two students thought that what was being advertised was a telephone or communications company, most of them recognized that the purpose of the advertisement was to associate Pernod on a connotative level with feelings of comfort and strength, power

and warmth, light and freedom. One student even remarked on the free-hand form of lettering in *'FREE THE SPIRIT'* as visually signifying the freedom which it denotes. They listed amongst reasons for drinking Pernod the implied offer of "going places and meeting people", "getting in touch with the whole world", "doing what you really want", "enjoying yourself", "excitement", "wildness", "fun", "confidence", "independence" and "the beginning of a new life". Many also saw the whole text as a dramatisation of a battle between light and darkness, with Pernod seen as a "heavenly and divine" drink which is on the side of light ("Pernod is better than the darkness in her life.... [she has] given up everything in her life for her Pernod").

Some of them saw the various religious references in the words and imagery at the outset (especially the telegraph pole\crosses), while others developed this dimension further as they reflected on reasons for **not** drinking Pernod. In addition to their articulations of the 'preferred' reading they commented on the "fantasy world", "false dreams" and "escape" offered by what was universally recognized as a dangerous and addictive drug ("instead of freeing your spirit, it kills your spirit"). Close analysis and discussion of specific semantic elements in the text enabled them to develop alternative 'oppositional' and 'negotiated' readings and to superimpose their prior knowledge about the effects of alcohol and the unreliability of the promises offered by the text. These readings showed that they were not duped by the advertisement. They also showed how they could read at different levels of significance, with an awareness of the rhetorical and ideological designs of the text. They did not need to be inoculated against the text's persuasive power. They simply needed an opportunity to demonstrate and a structure to articulate some of the cultural knowledge which they had already acquired informally.

The Pernod advertisement is typical of the way in which the advertising industry creates 'constructive dissatisfaction'. Many other examples could equally well be analysed in this way. Advertising typically offers us products as a means of escape from an unsatisfactory world into a fantastic secondary world where our dreams are fulfilled. It claims implicitly that spiritual needs can be fulfilled by material means. In the process, it tries to sell us not just a product but a set of ideas and beliefs about ourselves which have great power in our modern Western societies. One of the dangers of this process is accepting the illusion that material goods can satisfy spiritual needs.

The persuasive techniques used by advertising need special attention. Its rhetoric is relatively hidden because its propositions are put metaphorically and visually rather than logically. Its promises are only loosely associated with the product. So when the product does not satisfy the original needs, we are unlikely to feel we have been deceived by the product or by the advertisement. We are more likely to internalise our disappointment and compensate by more consumption. When the product fails to fulfil its promise, rather than rejecting the illusion or the product, we may become co-dependent in maintaining the basic illusion that material products can satisfy spiritual needs. In order that we may continue to live in our dreams, advertisements have to keep offering new promises and new dreams. Advertisers know us well. They sell us products by selling us ourselves. In this way, for those who can afford to buy, a cycle of aspiration, desire, consumption, dissatisfaction and compensation is created.

The approach I have outlined centres on questions of individual responses to advertising, but Media Education is also concerned with many other ethical issues and many other kinds of texts. The legal constraints and codes of practice which surround the media also merit investigation. In many cases, legality and morality are not identical. It would be very interesting to explore, for example, the contradictions between the relatively permissive attitude to alcohol and tobacco advertising and Health Education policy in the UK. There is also a tension worth exploring between the state's acceptance of advertising as an index of a healthy economy and its desire to develop its citizens spiritually and morally. I am not advocating more rigid controls on advertising. Nor am I suggesting that such methods can simply be exposed by teachers so as to enable students to make moral judgements which might protect them. Neither banning nor preaching is likely to be effective alone. This principle applies to the study of all media texts. Television and radio programmes, newspapers and magazines, pop music and cinema all need to be approached in a way which engages with their values and acknowledges the pleasures which they offer.

Values need to be learnt in an active and interrogative way rather than passively absorbed. Students need to learn how to decode culture from the inside and for themselves. The 'outside' world of values must be examined through the medium of individual consciousness and identity. Articulating the implications

of cultural texts makes them visible, and making them visible makes them negotiable.

The role of teacher educators in this process is crucial. We need to help schools and teachers not to ignore the media, nor to condemn them, for the media cannot simply be counteracted with a forced diet of high literary culture. The media need to be approached seriously and systematically in the classroom as a way of promoting spiritual and moral development in students. 'Critical autonomy' must create new 'watchdogs' in students' minds in order to open up every text to questioning and reflection. Many teachers of English have the basic skills to help in this, because of their special expertise in engaging and developing the imaginations of students. Yet we need to provide more and better training to help them in the process of decoding culture.

One of the ultimate goals expressed in the *Spiritual and Moral Development* paper is for schools to provide "reflective and aesthetic experience and the discussion of questions about meaning and purpose" (NCC 1993: 9). By bringing the worlds of media information and formal education together in a constructive way, Media Education offers one of the most powerful, accessible and effective ways of achieving that goal. It opens up the potential for a form of literacy which is more than functional and which recognizes that information is always value-laden.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING, EDUCATION AND POWER

Christopher Brumfit

This paper aims to explore the relationships between English as a world language, native speakers and their governments, and education.

Language and Political Power

English is a world language because its speakers are widely distributed throughout the world. Historically, it shares with French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Dutch, and Italian, the characteristic of having been exported to colonial and imperial territories as part of nineteenth century conquests by European nations. In this sense, English is an imperialist language. But it shares expansion also with languages which have gained numbers by accretion rather than by travel to distant parts of the world. Russian, Chinese and Arabic have expanded their numbers also in the past two hundred years.

Now, however, English has a numerical dominance greater than that of these other languages. In an article in the first issue of the magazine *English Today*, in January 1985, David Crystal cites relevant estimates: about a third of the current world population either lives in countries where English is an official language, or uses English with some competence as a foreign language. It is suggested that 700 million people have a reasonable standard of English, and two billion have some contact with the language in their normal lives. Elsewhere, Crystal points out that the many dialects of Chinese, bound together by the written language, combine to give the only language that exceeds even a third of the figure for English, and the geographical range and the range of cultures embraced by Chinese as a second language is much more restricted than those for English (Crystal, 1987: 287).

If we examine conquest and economic domination in other periods, it becomes clear that (to varying extents) major languages have all had periods of 'imperial' influence. Certainly, of non-western European languages, Russian, Arabic, Swahili, Chinese and Japanese share this characteristic.

English was spread from Britain in two distinct periods of imperial expansion. Furthermore, through its American variety, it has been the medium of economic domination in the twentieth century, while the older colonial empires declined.

Even in a group like the OECD, which excludes colonised countries, six of its twenty-four member states have native-speakers of English as the majority of their populations.

Some would wish to use these undisputed facts to criticise particular groups of people: imperialists, British or Americans, capitalists or Christians or whites. Before I explore the implications of this, though, I would like to offer, for contrast, a brief historico-linguistic sketch of the 1830-40s (based on Hobsbawm, 1962: 168-9). I do this because the time is far enough away, and the languages are remote enough from the experiences of many (though not of course all) language teachers, to enable some issues to be seen from an external perspective.

Commenting on the nineteenth century nationalist movements, Hobsbawm remarks that small elites can operate in foreign languages, but that once enough people are educated, the struggle for a national language becomes irresistible. He writes:

> ... the moment when textbooks or newspapers in the national language are first written ... measures a crucial step in national evolution. The 1830s saw this step taken over large areas of Europe. Thus the first major Czech works in astronomy, chemistry, anthropology, mineralogy and botany were written or completed in this decade; and so, in Rumania, were the first school textbooks substituting Rumanian for the previously current Greek. Hungarian was adopted instead of Latin as the official language of the Hungarian Diet in 1840, though Budapest University, controlled from Vienna, did not abandon Latin lectures until 1844. The Zagreb Gai published his *Croatian Gazette*, (later *Illyrian National Gazette*) from 1835 in the first literary version of what had hitherto been merely a complex of dialects. In countries which had long possessed an official national language, the change cannot be so easily measured, though it is interesting that after 1830 the number of German books published in Germany (as against Latin and French titles) for the first time consistently exceeded 90 per cent ....

The figures for literacy in this period are also instructive: the southern Slavs had less than half a per cent literacy in 1827, the Russians two per cent in 1840. Forty to fifty per cent of the populations of Britain, France and Belgium were illiterate in the 1840s, according to nineteenth century estimates. To a considerable extent, where powerful nationalist forces developed, they coincided with the rise of literacy in local languages.

This evidence is suggestive to those who wish to consider language in relation to power - and also leads us to ask what linguistic results may emerge from current political changes in the same region! But it does indicate some of the problems in ascribing cause and effect. The relationship between language as a symbol of independence or subservience, and actual power relations cannot be a given one-way process. Do we become literate because we wish to use education to fight for liberty, or do we become literate as a result of attaining liberty? Which is cause and which is effect?

English Language Teaching operates in contexts in which language has the same kind of historical significance as that suggested by Hobsbawm. But which side is it on? Greek or Latin were not agents of major political power in the way that English is now. Rightly or wrongly, many countries, or regions, use English as an instrument in the balance of local power. Should we be distinguishing "English" in opposition to "Afrikaans" from "English" in opposition to "Hindi", from "English" in opposition to "Dutch", or "Russian", or even "American"? (I use inverted commas to indicate that "English" is not just a language, but a symbolic cultural possession out of a range of options, as are the other languages.)

Power Relations

I do not know of any examples in history of economic contact in which gross technological imbalance has not resulted in domination once trade has established mutual needs. This is not to say that all relations between peoples have been equally damaging, equally exploitative, or equally beneficial, but it is to claim that the idea that we can avoid mutual dependence of some sort is based either on an ignorance of history, or on a utopian and sentimental vision of human relations that history offers little support for, though it may nonetheless be an important and inspiring ideal. A closely related tradition of philosophical anarchism (see, for example, Woodcock, 1962: 443-51, which discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the resistance to economic and political domination of the movement) has clearly offered a sequence of models (Godwin, Tolstoy, Kropotkin) whose ideals have inspired activists such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and more recent Eastern European resistance. But it is arguable that the success of such movements proceeds more from the bankruptcy of the powerful than from the moral superiority of the weak.

What would be the implications if a linguistic separatist position was possible? We live in a world in which news can travel rapidly to all parts of the globe, and where the implications of new technology can rarely stay hidden for long from the international community. Given that we have the jet plane, and we have television, what difficult questions arise?

Who, for example, decides that penicillin will not be offered to groups of people who know about it but have not themselves invented it? Who negotiates trade relations between primary producers and secondary manufacturers? Who expresses the wishes of those who are filmed for television versus those who make films? Who decides who sells what sophisticated weaponry to whom? The list of questions could be endless.

Decisions on matters such as these, many of which relate closely to survival, are bound up with questions of power and money, and such questions require relatively equal negotiation between the various parties. Such negotiation leads in practice to a desire for a common language. Those who most need to be treated equally, because they start from a position of technical or political weakness, will have strong incentives to learn the languages of those who possess the power and the technology. The latter group has less economic or political incentive to learn the languages of other groups, because they can afford to be relatively independent. So there will be a tendency for speakers of many languages to gravitate towards the languages of the fewer groups with technical and political power. Any right to self-determination, any support for relative democracy or independence for a particular country or a particular group within a country will be contingent upon the ability to negotiate, on as equal terms as possible, with those outsiders who possess and control wealth. Hence our mutual interdependence carries with it a strong tendency towards mass communication. Such a tendency is unlikely to be counteracted until wealth and technology are much more evenly distributed through the countries of the world. It is a matter of personal political faith whether one believes that such redistribution will ever be practically possible. But in the world we live in now, a practical politician may argue, it seems a distant prospect which is scarcely relevant to an analysis of current relationships between language and power. Some members at least, of all language groups, will need access to economically significant major languages.

The major objections to this position will come from those who see economic and technological considerations as less important than culture and identity. Against the tendencies encouraging international contact must be set the need for individuals to express their own sense of personal and community tradition. On the one hand we have the necessity to preserve our independence by not being exploited and deprived of autonomy by outsiders; on the other we need to identify with what we are preserving. The former requires the languages of external contact, and the latter the language of the local and communal. But, at the very least, the local and communal depends on the tolerance of the externally powerful. And this toleration will often need to be negotiated from a position of local strength, not from an excluded or marginalised position.

The Role of English in the 1990s

If the position outlined above makes sense, it is apparent that a number of powerful languages will inevitably be significant in both national and international relations. Unequal roles for different languages will tend to reflect the unequal power relations of the dominant group using them. Consequently, we cannot avoid the impact of languages of wider communication on local languages. However, there may well be undesirable side-effects that we should try to avoid.

With a model such as this we would be more concerned to mitigate the effects of human relations than to try to abolish such relations altogether. Can we believe that it is possible to avoid some languages dominating others, as long as economic and military power are unequally distributed? Do we believe that we should base our policies on a view that such power will ever be equally distributed in the foreseeable future?

But we also need to be clear what is not being claimed. In a paper first published in 1982 and revised for book-publication, I attempted to define what we should mean by 'English' in the phrase 'English as an international language' (Brumfit 1985: 35-40). I argued that it was difficult to show that English was any better than any other language on purely linguistic grounds, though it was in principle possible that English speakers might be, for historical or cultural reasons, more tolerant of linguistic diversity, and consequently more hospitable to foreigners speaking English, than speakers of some other languages. If this could be shown to be so, this attitude might have an impact on the discourse

structures favoured in English, and lead to a higher degree of flexibility. But this claim lacks empirical support and is hypothetical at present.

The concluding paragraph of the paper, looking at English from a British perspective, reads as follows:

> I pointed out that this leads to a curious paradox. There is a strong movement across the world towards greater communication across cultures, and the English language cannot avoid having a major role to play in this process. But there are risks as well as advantages in this process for the native-speaking English countries. On the one hand they may benefit culturally by having direct access to cultures which are historically and geographically far away from themselves as English is used for secondary purposes by more and more people outside their traditional spheres of influence. And they may achieve economic, even perhaps some political advantages, by sharing a common language. But they risk also creating enmities as well as loyalties. American English may be preferred to British by countries wishing to express their independence from a traditional British connection; countries too closely connected by geography or history to the States have been known to turn towards Britain for a change in model and teaching policy for their English. The same is happening in contacts with Australia and New Zealand. The English-speaking world can be played politically by the non-English-speaking world. Nor need this process be seen solely between the varieties of the English language. There is no necessity for there to be only one. People, and nations, need to be able to hide behind misunderstanding as well as to reveal all to each other. The world, unless it manifests an unprecedented desire for unity in the near future, will require a minimum of two international languages, if only to play them off against each other in self-defence. The paradox for the development of English as an international language is that the more multicultured English becomes the more it will be perceived as a threat and the more it will, in the end, lead people to wish for some alternatives to English. In the meantime, however, users of the English language have been provided with a unique opportunity for cross-cultural contact on a hitherto unprecedented scale. The immediate gains will be not merely political and economic, but linguistic and pedagogic also, as we understand more fully the process of linguistic adaptation to the widely varied needs of people throughout the world. But we do need to consider the paradox very carefully. Perhaps those who care for international communication and world peace should put their efforts into ensuring that there are several viable languages of international communication,

and should resist pressures for a whole world of second-language English users.

It may be objected that the position that has been outlined represents simply the liberal face of exploitation. However, such a claim is very difficult to respond to with clear evidence. There is no doubt that the English language, and English literature as an academic subject, have been perceived to inhibit local developments in both language and culture (see for example the arguments in Ngugi, 1981). The key question is whether this is the inevitable result of pressures between international and local cultures. If it is, we should be looking to mitigate the effects of such pressure. If, however, it could be avoided without undesirable side-effects, we should be looking for means to avoid this.

Criticisms of the role of English have generally come from three related but separable positions. Because English has been the language of government and education in many parts of the world, it has imposed a barrier on access to higher education and thus to individual economic advancement. Ngugi remembers a boy in his class of 1954 who did well in all the other subjects but did not pass in English. He therefore failed the entire School Certificate examination and went on to work in a bus company. Exactly the same situation was reported by a student from Hong Kong coming to Southampton University in September 1988, about friends who had been at school with her. Such unfairnesses are remembered with resentment and guilt by the successful as well as the unsuccessful. However understandable the motivation for language hurdles of this kind (and many not-so-very-old people in Britain will remember Latin being used to similar effect for university entrance), the impact is hard to defend, and constant debate is necessary to ensure that the condition of advancement has not lost whatever justification it may originally have had.

The other two positions are more fundamental. A psychological position has insisted on the need for schooling, especially at the early stages, to be in the mother tongue rather than a second language. The divorce between home and school should be minimised, it is claimed, the bilingual setting representing in its starkest form perennial arguments about the relationship between the language of the home and the language of the school (see Bernstein, 1971, and criticisms in Stubbs, 1976 and Trudgill, 1975).

Underlying these positions is the third one, a much more radical critique of the whole notion of metropolitan culture and its impact on local culture. Here,

observers note the undoubted repression of minority language forms that accompanied the promotion of standard languages during the periods of nineteenth century nationalism. Leith (1983), for example, describes the suppression of Welsh and Scottish Gaelic as compulsory education developed in Britain.

Outside Britain, Gandhi has explored this position most strikingly with reference to English:

> Polak and I had often very heated discussions about the desirability or otherwise of giving the children an English education. It has always been my conviction that Indian parents who train their children to think and talk in English from their infancy betray their children and their country. They deprive them of the spiritual and social heritage of the nation, and render them to that extent unfit for the service of the country. Having these convictions, I made a point of always talking to my children in Gujerati. Polak never liked this. He thought I was spoiling their future. He contended, with all the vigour and love at his command, that, if children were to learn a universal language like English from their infancy, they would easily gain considerable advantage over others in the race of life. He failed to convince me. (Gandhi, 1927: 260-261)

Yet the position is immensely complex. Greene (1972), writing of nineteenth century Ireland, reports:

> ... parents who knew little or no English were not content that their children should learn English at school - which, since the establishment of the national school system was not too difficult to achieve - but went much further, by insisting that they should not teach Irish at all. P J Keenan, a Chief Inspector of National Schools, described this to a Royal Commission in 1868:
>
> > I have myself reported the fact that the anxiety of the people to learn English in parts of Ireland which I have visited is so intense that they have instituted a sort of police system over the children to prevent them uttering a single word of Irish.... I saw in such cases that the intelligence of the children was positively stunted - that it dwindled away....
>
> Three years earlier, W J Menzies had told the Argyll Commissioners:
>
> > It would seem to be a great object for the country, that the means of teaching them English, and of promoting a voluntary

> emigration, should be introduced among them, and it probably would be the cheapest mode in the end, to give them a good English education, which would enable them to procure subsistence and high wages elsewhere, rather than to stay and starve at home. (cited in Durkacz, 1983: 217)

These quotations illustrate the dilemmas of administrators, parents and speakers of languages without economic power. They do not enable us to identify simple solutions in which the language is the servant only of one side or the other. Yet we must also acknowledge that the power of the language may be exploited for good or for evil. Once a language becomes an instrument of cultural diplomacy, it may be subject to the happy and haphazard generosity encouraged by George West's requests for English language materials in Portugal in 1934 (Donaldson, 1984:23-24), or to the explicitly manipulative statements found in many reports through the British Council's history. The Teaching of English Overseas Report of 1956 is typical of this strand when it writes:

> In both the Middle and Far East the United Kingdom has the strongest reasons, military, political and economic, for extending the use of English, and for making available as many teachers and technicians as possible. She ought not to stand by... while Libya is offered a German professor of English for her new university and Egypt exports Egyptian teachers of English and other subjects to Kuwait. (quoted in Donaldson, 1984: 202)

Such sentiments are scarcely surprising, but they are clearly capable of interpretation as part of a pattern of protecting national interests. Indeed, Donaldson's history of the British Council refers several times to the teaching of English as being different from normal aid provision because of its marketability and its closeness to British national identity. A policy of 'my language, right or wrong' will inevitably breed the worst characteristics of imperialism because of its insensitivity to local perceptions of need, both for English and for recognition of other languages.

It is difficult, then, to see any necessary relationship between any language and any ideology. Yet the language of an imperial power will inevitably take on some characteristics of imperialism when used by some of its speakers. However, the range and complexity of the issues for which English is currently needed (a direct result of its success as a world language) make it impossible

to control. There is no evidence of a plan of linguistic imperialism, and even if there were it is difficult to see how a language used by so many people of all ideologies in so many countries could possibly be an instrument of only one set of values. If at the moment the Chinese, the Namibians, the Iranians, and the Iraqis, among so many others, are willing to use English for persuasion of others to their points of view, the language is no longer in the control of its native speakers, and has become post-imperial.

Except that the weapon, the language, that has been expropriated, remains a symbol of culture greater than even the gun. The pen is mightier than the sword because it writes language. And there is a power in language that native speakers cannot afford to forget. Teachers, too, become quasi-native speakers in the power structure. We expect ourselves to, and we welcome the effectiveness of teaching when we have native-speaker-like command of the language. But it is very noticeable how much power lies in our language teaching metaphors: even the innocent word "command" of a language, let alone the "control" and the "freedom", the "drilling", the "monitoring", the "facilitation" and the "empowering"! Who are we, to facilitate and empower?

The linguistic power that the native-speakers have inherited (without choice: they could not refuse their inheritance) is only an example written large of the power that teachers have at the expense of learners. But because it is language that we teach, the symbolic value is greater even than in other subjects, for we are interfering in each individual's identity, even if we do so to expand their range of options, to broaden their repertoire. Doing this gives us certain privileges, for - with intermediate and advanced learners - we have access to people's ideas and thinking in a way denied to teachers of less open-ended subjects. But that gain carries responsibilities of sensitivity and care. The power of the tongue, the power of the pen can breed justified resentment, and our teaching will be more effective, the more sensitive to the love-hate relationship we can be. Behind the pen is a hand. For many of us there may be contexts where Dylan Thomas's poem may be more applicable to our hands and tongues than we like to admit. Certainly, there is an irony in a poem of this kind being written in English by a Welshman. But if it were written in Welsh, I would not be able to use it for you, my anonymous reader, to illustrate the risks of power and the risks of language. And that is the English teacher's paradox, which we must each work out in our own way.

The hand that signed the paper felled a city;
Five sovereign fingers taxed the breath,
Doubled the globe of dead and halved a country;
These five kings did a king to death.

The mighty hand leads to a sloping shoulder,
The finger joints are cramped with chalk;
A goose's quill has put an end to murder
That put an end to talk.

The hand that signed the treaty bred a fever,
And famine grew, and locusts came;
Great is the hand that holds dominion over
Man by a scribbled name.

The five kings count the dead but do not soften
The crusted wound nor stroke the brow;
A hand rules pity as a hand rules heaven;
Hands have no tears to flow.

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112

THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE: SPAIN'S MINORITY LANGUAGES[1]

Clare Mar-Molinero

Over the centuries language has always played a significant role in Spanish politics. The tensions between the minority languages spoken in regions on the peripheries, such as Catalan, Basque and Galician, and the language of the centre, Castilian, have illustrated the relentless drive to enforce a Castilian cultural and political hegemony on the emerging Spanish state, despite the undeniable fact that the Spanish territory is made up of various different nations. One of the most repressive centrist regimes in this tradition was that of the dictator Franco, whose rule imposed Castilian supremacy and proscribed all signs of diversity in the aftermath of the bloody Civil War of the 1930's and to a greater or lesser degree for the following forty years. Franco died in 1975, and, somewhat to the amazement of many commentators, Spain flung itself into the transition towards a fully-fledged western-style democratic regime. An essential part of this process was the drawing up and public ratification of a new constitution in 1978. As is to be expected of such a legal framework being written so soon after the end of the dictatorship, this is a document of consummate consensus and ambiguity, which attempts – and to a very large extent succeeds – to bring together the widely diverse aspirations, beliefs and identities of the Spanish people.

Article 3 of Spain's 1978 constitution has been heralded as a radical new recognition of linguistic rights and cultural pluralism by many commentators (see, e.g, Siguán, 1992). However, a careful analysis of this article confirms the view that the politics of language in Spain remain contentious and ambiguous, in part because of the very language of politics itself.

In the following discussion I will examine the pull between consensus and ambiguity which underpins the present linguistic legal framework in Spain, and how, as ever, this represents the tensions between the core and periphery of the Spanish state in its efforts to define nationhood and collective identity. I will emphasize, too, the fact that there exist many differences between the various minority language groups in terms of the successes or failures in their language planning efforts. All such discussions, too, have to be seen before the backdrop of the moves towards the so-called European unity in terms of

how this might affect the promotion of linguistic minorities and their relationships with dominant language groups.

The first clause of Article 3 states; 'Castilian is the official Spanish language of the State'[2]. With the naming of 'Castilian' and not 'Spanish' an important statement acknowledging the existence of various 'Spanish' languages is made, and one that has been bitterly disputed by many, not only on the political Right (see, e.g. Salvador, 1987). It is significant, too, that 'state' and not 'nation' is used, given the delicate and complicated relationship between language and national identity which is only too evident in the Spanish context. Political boundaries of a state are more easily defined than those of a nation. This clause, however, goes on to say 'All Spaniards have the duty to know it [Castilian] and the right to use it'. The radical tone of the first sentence is immediately counteracted by a starkly prescriptive directive in the second. It is difficult to find any national constitution worldwide which prescribes the **duty** to know a language. However, what is 'know'? Is it something purely passive requiring no active competence? How can it be demonstrated that a citizen does or does not 'know' a language? This is highly ambiguous and awaits legal interpretation and clarification.

Clause 2 declares that 'The other Spanish languages will also be official in the respective Autonomous Communities in accordance with their statutes.' Once again a refreshingly enabling definition of Spain's minority languages, never tolerated in the previous forty years, is qualified by the highly prescriptive constraint of limiting their official status to their own territorial space. This clear geographical limitation means realistically that the future role of the minority languages will always take second place to Castilian. It could even be argued that it contravenes the spirit of later articles of the Constitution which claim equality for all Spanish citizens. Article 14 of the Constitution, for example, states that

> Spaniards are equal in the eyes of the law, with no form of discrimination being allowed to prevail for reasons of birth, race, sex, religion, opinion or any other condition or personal or social cirumstance.

Those Spanish citizens whose mother tongue is not Castilian could argue that they do not have equal linguistic rights to those who are Castilian mother tongue speakers. A native Catalan speaker cannot insist on the right to use

Catalan in official contexts in, for example, Madrid. Native Basque speakers cannot expect the Spanish state to provide Basque teaching to their children if they happen to live in, for example, Seville. On the other hand, throughout the Spanish state Castilian may be used and must be provided for. What seems a benevolent policy to promote linguistic pluralism does in fact create linguistic reservations and supports the subordination of the peripheries to the Castilian core.

As if to counter the potential negative sense of the second clause, the third one confirms a belief in linguistic plurality when it states: 'The richness of Spain's different linguistic varieties is a cultural heritage which shall be the object of special respect and protection'. Fine words which may serve to enable real actions, but, more cynically viewed, may mean nothing. Again legal interpretation of such concepts as 'respect' or 'protection' is needed.

However, it is probably fair to say that this final clause has permitted a new and imaginative understanding of Spain's linguistic map. It allows Autonomous Communities to define their local linguistic variety, and even when this is not considered a discrete separate language from Castilian, its own particular features can be recognised and protected. This has inspired work on lexical and phonological features in, for example, Andalusia and the Canary Islands, in order to draw up guidelines on what constitutes these regions' respective language varieties. The implications of this for such fields as education and the media is very significant, raising such issues as those of standard versus local language varieties, and forms of acceptable literacy, issues which have constantly plagued educators and language planners, not to mention politicians.

Despite these ambiguities in the constitutional framework there is no denying the substantial advances that have taken place since 1978 in the promotion and status of Spain's minority languages. It is notoriously difficult to agree a definition for the term 'language', but, most usefully for this discussion, it can be equated with the linguistic code of a speech community of a significant size and with, therefore, some political influence. In this sense it is generally accepted that Spain contains four such 'languages': Castilian, Catalan, Basque and Galician, although arguments in favour of Asturian and Aragonese, for instance, or for Galician to be a 'dialect' of Portuguese will always remain. Significantly the Francoist ideology termed Catalan and Galician 'dialects' in

a clear attempt to downgrade their status to a category normally considered inferior to a language.

It is in the regions of the three non-Castilian languages, the so-called 'historic' communities, where the greatest activity in terms of language planning efforts is taking place. These efforts are supported not only by Article 3 of the Constitution but also by the relevant Autonomy Statute and, in particular, by the local Linguistic Normalization Laws. There are many similarities as regards this legal framework and the areas of linguistic activity through which language planning is being pursued, but there are also important differences as should be expected when recognising that the various Autonomous Communities are not homogeneous and display marked differences.

By far the most active and apparently successful language promotion programmes are taking place in Catalonia, which is unsurprising given that it is the largest and wealthiest of the three relevant communities. The Autonomous Community of Catalonia has more than six million inhabitants, of whom approximately 90% claim to understand Catalan, whilst over 60% admit to speaking it in some form (for data on language distribution throughout Spain, see EC Commission, 1990). As in the Basque Country and Galicia the local government has set up a Directorate to coordinate language promotion programmes and is encouraging the teaching of and through the medium of Catalan, the development of modern terminologies in Catalan, the use of the local language in all government and administration and official public use, as well as through the media. The results are spectacular: the rise in the number of schools offering some or much of their curriculum through Catalan is sharp; most public notices, street names, menus, bank cheques, entrance tickets, etc. are in Catalan (sometimes exclusively, sometimes bilingually). There are two Barcelona and one Gerona daily papers in Catalan, two television channels uniquely in Catalan and a third giving some programmes in Catalan, there are also numerous Catalan local radio stations. Theatre, cinema and written publications flourish in Catalan. Significantly, much of this includes translations from languages other than Castilian (*Neighbours* or *The 'A' Team* dubbed in Catalan; Marx or Proust translated).

Catalan has always been the language of all the Catalan population, including, signficantly, the upper and middle classes, and in this sense, it is importantly different from Basque and Galician, and in fact from most comparable

sociolinguistic situations. This has meant that the language can serve as a symbol of social mobility and acceptance with the ensuing favourable attitudes to its use and teaching. This has undoubtedly helped overcome its single greatest obstacle, which is the large non-native Catalan speaking immigrant population now found resident in Catalonia. This has obviously diluted the spread of the language, and especially in the urban industrial areas where these immigrant groups are concentrated. However, unlike Basque, but like Galician, the accessibility of Catalan for Castilian speakers has helped provide a very high incidence of passive knowledge of the language by the region's population.

Nonetheless, Catalan shares, albeit to a lesser degree, with Basque and Galician (and in fact with many other minority languages) the challenge of mass communications in modern technological societies. Satellite television, international travel, computer technology, multinational business creating the so-called global village inevitably weaken the role of lesser-used languages and strengthen the position of world languages, such as, above all, English. Castilian is of course a widely spoken world language and therefore to compete with it or aspire to societal bilingualism with equal status for both languages (as stated in the Language Laws' objectives in the respective Autonomous Communities), is arguably an impossible goal.

With fewer than two and a half million inhabitants the Basque community is the smallest of the three where a minority language is being promoted. Fewer than 25% of these claim to speak Basque, reflecting the difficulty of access of the language which, unlike Catalan, Galician and Castilian, is not part of the Romance language continuum. The language has considerably less prestige and status than Catalan within its community, and significantly has not until recently been seen necessarily as a core value of Basque nationalism, although during the sixties and seventies the language was boosted with a certain kudos by being a symbol of the nationalist movement ETA (See Conversi, 1990). Another positive devlopment dating back to the sixties was the introduction of Basque schools, teaching Basque and providing a curriculum through the Basque medium. These schools are known as *'Ikastolas'* and were an important attempt to promote Basque identity, originally as largely clandestine groups, and then increasingly throughout the sixties and seventies as private organisations, often working as non-profit making parent cooperatives.

However, there is no strong literary tradition in Basque, and the codification of the language and selection of a standard variety from various competing dialects is very recent. All of which has made the teaching of Basque and the use of it in public life very much more difficult. The Basque Country also has an important non-Basque immigrant population who have been slow to want to learn Basque, which has, unlike Catalan, been associated with rural areas and backward traditionalism. There have, nonetheless, been improvements and successes as Basque is promoted through the education system (there are now state-funded *ikastolas*), and used in local government wherever possible. But the obstacles to the learning of Basque create the sense that its promotion is above all symbolic rather than practical.

Galicia like the Basque Country contains a small population, but by way of contrast has not been affected by immigration, and therefore a very high percentage speak the language, some 90% of its nearly three million population. However, Galician lacks status and therefore is not used for social advancement or for more educated literate purposes, except by a tiny minority of middle class intellectuals. The language planning activities, similar in conception to the Catalan and Basque ones, are attempting to counter these attitudes. However, an important difference in the case of Galician is the existence of a society which has known heavy emigration, leading in general terms to a conservative 'holding' mentality, particularly with womenfolk waiting for the return of the perceived head of the family. Such a predominantly rural society has not encouraged belief in cultural independence and confidence. Moreover, what changes are now taking place as a result of the new language policies must also be seen in the context of a counter movement by the so-called 'Reintegrationists', a small but vociferous group who romanticise the need to return Galicia and Galician to the fold of Mother Portugal. Neither the reintegrationists nor the isolationists (those who see Galician culture and language as separate from either of their larger neighbours) are able to substantially counter the influence and dominance of Castilian.

Clearly issues of national and group identity are present in all these activities to promote and protect minority language rights in Spain, as they are also in the determination of the Castilian centre to allow linguistic independence only up to a certain point. By limiting the promotion of non-Castilian languages to discrete geographical areas, the continued domination of Castilian as 'national'

language is ensured. The minorities' cultural identities are only acknowledged when they are linked to territorial identities. In a world of increasingly changing populations this is a questionable principle.

Indeed the linguistic map of Spain needs to be analyzed with two other elements in mind: the role of ever-increasing groups of immigrants, and the effect of a more closely integrated European Community. On the one hand the likely change in political power structures within the Community seems to point to the emergence of a Europe of the Regions, where the traditional national state centre will be increasingly bypassed through a relationship between the European supranational centres of power and the local regional centres. This is viewed by Catalans, Basques and Galicians as a real possibility for the strengthening of their particular cultures and languages, and is to some extent backed up with Community resources such as regional aid and initiatives like those pursued by the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages and the Mercator Project. Both these latter aim to improve knowledge and research about Europe's minority languages, sponsor the teaching and learning of these languages, and foster relations between those groups using them.

On the other hand, however, a major premise of the European Community is the encouragement and right of the freedom of movement of persons within the member states. This policy must have language implications, above all challenging the notion that linguistic and cultural identity can be tied to one geographical space. Added to this is the situation of the significant numbers of non-European immigrants, many of whom do not speak as their mother tongue the language of any member state. Spain has only recently begun to experience the social and cultural effects of such immigration, largely with groups from North Africa and Latin America. In the case of the latter, of course, language is not an issue, but it is becoming a very serious one in the case of the former. If Spain is to honour the spirit of the EC's 1977 directive encouraging all member states to provide at least some mother tongue education for the children of immigrants, this will put a strain on the delicate balance arrived at between the present national language and the minority ones, a balance by no means viewed by all as ideal but one which underlines the fraught relationship between language and constructs of national identity.

Notes

1. A version of this paper will appear in Graham, H. and Labanyi, J. (Eds.) (in press) *The Struggle for Modernity: an Introduction to Spanish Cultural Studies*, Oxford (O.U.P.)

2. All quotations are from the 1978 Spanish Constitution and are translated into English by the author

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SYNTACTIC VARIATION AND CHANGE IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN

Patrick Stevenson

Introduction

For the language learner, perhaps the most striking feature of German syntax is the apparently categorical location of the finite verb in final position in subordinate clauses introduced by a conjunction:

1 Petra kommt nicht mit ins Kino, weil sie zu beschäftigt ist.
[Petra isn't coming to the cinema, because she is too busy.]

This is, so to speak, the stereotypical feature of the language, the one most readily identified and most frequently caricatured by speakers of languages which do not have such patterns. One of the main reasons for this is the dislocation of two elements, the subject and the finite verb, which are felt to be so intimately linked that they should be in adjacent positions in the sentence. The argument in all such cases (German is, of course, far from unique in this respect) is that processing such sentences imposes considerable cognitive demands on the listener or even reader, and that this pattern is therefore uneconomical in communicative terms (Eisenberg 1989: 20; Kann 1972: 379).

The main aim of this paper will be to investigate the claim (see, e.g., Küper 1991; Admoni 1973; Kann 1972) that German syntax is undergoing a process of restructuring which, if it is maintained and taken to its logical conclusion, will result in the loss of this distinctive feature in favour of what Admoni (1970:13) calls 'gradlinige Satzkonstruktionen' (linear sentence structures), which in turn will lead to a reduction in syntactic complexity and thus to increased communicative efficiency (although it is worth noting that the increased use of hypotactic structures in written German often has the opposite effect). The discussion will focus on one particular sentence type and will derive from a small-scale empirical study conducted in Cologne.

The starting point for this discussion is the common observation that in certain contexts the finite verb in subordinate clauses is increasingly being located in second position, which is the 'normal' position for the verb in main clauses: contrast the 'normal' word order in example 1 above with the (apparently) non-standard variant:

2 Petra kommt nicht mit ins Kino, weil sie ist zu beschäftigt.

In fact, this pattern is far from new: until well into the 18th century both alternatives were current in both spoken and written German (Wells 1985: 253-4), and the verb-second construction has persisted in many traditional dialects, especially in the south of the German-speaking area (Gaumann 1983: 2, 15, 64-7). In a sense, therefore, the question here should perhaps be whether the current variability is an indication of a reversion to or a reassertion of an older form rather than an innovation. However, for the purposes of this paper it will be considered from a synchronic perspective and set in the context of a potentially general trend towards greater syntactic simplicity.

The relocation of the finite verb into second position in contexts other than simple declarative clauses is increasingly common (for example, in the second of two adjacent subordinate clauses linked by *und* (and), or in yes-no questions). These features are all familiar to linguistic observers but have been subject to relatively little empirical investigation (for theoretical discussion, see Zemb 1973; Brinkmann 1978; Engel 1969; Bierwisch 1978; Redder 1990; Thim-Mabrey 1982). Yet this is much needed, partly because most of these 'alternative' constructions are scarcely tolerated if at all by normative grammarians (see, e.g., on the feature to be discussed here: Engel 1988: 730; it is not even mentioned in Helbig and Buscha 1986, Dreyer and Schmitt 1985 or Götze and Hess-Lüttich 1989), and partly because some at least appear to be subject to clearly identifiable constraints, which suggests that they should not be dismissed as irregular deviations or performance errors. For example, verb-second order seems to occur in some types of subordinate clause but not others, even then only in certain syntactic environments, and only in spontaneous colloquial speech. In other words, for many (perhaps most) subordinate clauses the verb-final rule is categorical, while some have a variable pattern.

This looks like a classic example of the early stages of change, but as Günthner (1993) argues it could equally well be a case of patterned inherent variation. The following sections will therefore consider empirical evidence on the use of one type of clause, the *weil-Satz* (because-clause) in relation to the broader question of what this kind of variation actually represents.

Outline of study

The empirical basis for the discussion here consists of data gathered in a small-scale survey of 30 adults (both male and female, of different age groups and with various degrees of formal education) and 10 children in the course of four experiments, all conducted by an anglophone fieldworker with a good knowledge of German (for other empirical studies on this topic, see Gaumann 1983, Günthner 1993 and Schlobinski 1992).

The first two experiments took the form of individual interviews with first the adults, then the children. The interviews were relatively unstructured and the objective was to generate an informal atmosphere using a variety of familiar techniques to overcome the Observer's Paradox (Labov 1972: 209; Milroy 1987: 59-60). The informants were told that the survey was part of a project on local identities in post-unification Germany. The remaining two experiments consisted of a subjective reaction test and a self-evaluation test: the informants were confronted with a set of nine sentences containing because-clauses in various contexts and were asked first to judge the acceptability of these sentences and then to indicate whether they would use such sentences themselves.

Discussion of the experiments

Interviews with adults

The single most striking result of this experiment was the remarkably high overall frequency of the verb-second pattern: it occurred in 47% of all because-clauses, and the relative proportion for each speaker increased during the discussion of emotive topics (such as the Gulf War, immigration, the effects of unification). This fact alone underscores the significance of the feature and demonstrates that it should not be treated as a marginal phenomenon in contemporary spoken German.

Possible associations with extralinguistic factors such as sex, age and degree of education were looked for, but although some interesting tendencies emerged the scale of the survey was too small for any significant conclusions to be drawn. The important general point that did emerge clearly is that this feature is not restricted to any social grouping: it occurred to a greater or lesser extent in the

speech of all the informants, which confirms the intuitive assertions made by other observers such as Gaumann (1983: 83-5) and Sandig (1973: 41-2).

The data was far more revealing with respect to linguistic constraints, which were the real object of the study. It had been suggested (e.g. in Glück and Sauer 1990: 48) that the verb-second pattern would only actually occur in one of the three theoretically possible syntactic configurations: that is to say, when the *weil*-clause follows the main clause, not when it precedes or is embedded in the main clause. It is also said to be associated with a pause after the conjunction. Our findings only partially support this view, as can be seen in Table 1.

The *weil*-clauses occurring in the interviews were classified into five categories (to simplify the presentation, examples are given here in English):

- *weil* is used as a turn-taking device rather than to introduce an explanatory clause
  [A: I think cable TV is a waste of money, I hardly ever ...
  B: ... because you get lots of channels you don't really want.]

- the *weil*-clause is a direct answer to a why? question
  [A: Why do you use this software?
  B: Because it's more user-friendly.]

- the *weil*-clause follows a main clause with a pause after *weil*
  [I'm not going on holiday this year because ... I can't afford it.]

- the *weil*-clause follows a main clause with no pause after *weil*
  [I vote for the Tories because they're such wonderful people.]

- the *weil*-clause is embedded in the main clause
  [The Tories, because they're such wonderful people, always get my vote.]

There were no occurrences of the configuration '*weil*-clause precedes main clause' [Because the Tories are such wonderful people, they always get my vote]. This is in fact not surprising, given the function of such clauses, and I shall return to this in the final section.

Table 1: Distribution of *weil*-clauses according to utterance type and word order

Context	Verb-final n	%	Verb-second n	%	TOTAL n
Turn-taking	87	**66**	45	**34**	122
Answer to 'why?'	70	**57**	52	**43**	122
MC → *weil* + pause	12	**13**	84	**87**	96
MC → *weil* – pause	35	**66**	18	**34**	53
MC [*weil*] MC	19	**100**	0	**0**	19
Total	223	**53**	199	**47**	422

In absolute terms, *weil*-clauses (regardless of word order pattern) were used far more frequently as 'free-standing' elements (in answers to why? questions and as turn-taking signals) than in complex sentences. This again is unsurprising, given that the data is drawn from fairly informal spontaneous speech, which is generally characterised by simple sentence patterns such as single clauses and paratactic constructions. The data has not yet been subjected to statistical tests for significance, but the figures are strongly suggestive of two things: first, that adult speakers categorically apply the verb-final rule when the *weil*-clause is embedded in the main clause; and secondly, that the verb-second pattern is common in at least the four other contexts identified here, especially but by no means only when *weil* is followed by a pause. We shall consider the implications of this in the final section, but at this stage it is perhaps useful to establish a tentative hierarchy of contexts favouring the use of the verb-second variant:

(MC → *weil* + pause) >
(answer to 'why?') >
(MC → *weil* – pause) and (turn-taking) >
(MC [*weil*] MC)

Interviews with children

The overall frequency of occurrence of the verb-second pattern amongst this group was higher than for the adults, but the reasons for this are open to speculation. For example, it could be that the children were less sensitive to or less aware of the standard norms, or it could be that they were more relaxed in the presence of the fieldworker and tape-recorder. What is of interest here is first that, unlike the adults, the children actually do use the supposedly 'impossible' pattern of verb-second in *weil*-clause embedded in main clause, albeit very occasionally; secondly, that the verb-second pattern appears to be categorical in the context (MC → *weil* + pause); and thirdly, that the hierarchy of constraints is identical to that established for the adult speakers.

Questionnaires on acceptability and self-reported usage

The informants were asked to judge 9 sentences, first in terms of general acceptability and secondly with respect to their own usage. One sentence conformed to the standard norm (verb-final), all the others contained the verb-second pattern in various permutations. For this part of the study, we were interested only in complex sentences, so that the categories (answer to why? question) and (turn-taking signal) were ignored. The results cannot be spelt out in detail here, but it is worth noting that they suggest the following sequence of acceptability of the verb-second pattern (the standard pattern was predictably considered most acceptable):

(MC → *weil* + pause) >
(MC → *weil* – pause) >
(*weil* → MC) >
(MC [*weil*] MC)

This sequence again matches the hierarchy established earlier for actual usage by both the adults and the children [except that (*weil* + MC) had not occurred in the interviews].

The self-reports showed a similar range of scores to those for acceptability, and will not be dealt with in detail here (see below), although it is perhaps worth noting that middle-aged speakers generally claimed a lower use of the verb-second pattern than either younger or older speakers. However, this self-judgement does not correspond to actual recorded usage, so there is no reason to suppose that age-grading is at work here.

Comparison of actual use, self-reported use and acceptability

It is difficult to draw direct comparisons between the results of the interviews and the questionnaires because of the different methods used for quantifying the results. However, an impressionistic comparison suggests certain tendencies. For example, it appears that virtually all the adult speakers (the children's group was not taken into account) agree on the unacceptability of the verb-second pattern in embedded *weil*-clauses and quite accurately assess their own speech behaviour in this respect.

There also seems to be a correspondence between the results from all three tests for the context (MC → *weil* – pause). However, while the presence of a pause after *weil* in such contexts appears to make the verb-second pattern much more acceptable, speakers apparently substantially underestimate their own use of it. Even though no firm conclusions can be drawn from this, we can speculate that while many speakers are willing to acknowledge the legitimate place of this supposedly non-standard feature in at least certain types of contemporary German, they have not yet to the same extent overcome the strictures and authority of prescriptive grammars.

Discussion and conclusions

The results of this small-scale investigation go some way towards providing an empirical and rather more differentiated corroboration of previous studies. Even if the scope of the survey does not warrant very firm conclusions, we nevertheless have grounds to argue that the verb-second pattern in *weil*-clauses is very frequent in colloquial speech; that it enjoys a high level of awareness amongst native speakers; that likelihood of occurrence appears to depend on linguistic context or function rather than on extralinguistic factors; and that speakers' evaluation of the construction is as variable as their usage of it and broadly corresponds with the hierarchy of usage. It is clearly a significant feature of colloquial speech, which appears to be subject to certain specific constraints and therefore demands more serious attention than it is customarily given in grammars of German (see also Glück and Sauer forthcoming).

A number of explanations have been proposed (see, for example, Gaumann 1983; Eisenberg 1989; Sandig 1973; Hentschel and Weydt 1990; Günthner 1993; Schlobinski 1992) specifically for the variable application of the verb-second pattern after *weil*. One possibility is that the two patterns represent two distinct

functions. The location of the finite verb in clause-final position may be seen as the structural counterpart to the conjunction introducing the clause: they complement or reinforce each other and together signify 'subordination'. According to this view, the conjunction has a dual function, signalling (a) a logical connection between two sentences (in this case that one provides an explanation of or for the other) and (b) the dependency of one sentence on the other. Moving the verb to second position, the 'normal' or unmarked position for the verb in main clauses, would then have the effect of retaining the logical connection between the two sentences while removing the implication of subordination or dependency (van de Velde 1974: 78; Gaumann 1983: 104).[1] This would mean that *weil* used in this way becomes both formally and semantically equivalent to the co-ordinating conjunction *denn* (see Durrell 1991: 394). In fact, both *weil* and *denn* derive from a single earlier form *wande*, which was used variably with both verb-second and verb-final constructions (Gaumann 1983: 42; Sandig 1973: 42). However, while *weil* is common in both written and spoken German, *denn* rarely occurs in speech. It could therefore be argued that *weil* with verb-second pattern is the spoken counterpart of written *denn*. This might also explain why in complex sentences it is largely confined to the context (*weil*-clause follows main clause), as this is the only context in which *denn* can be used; the relationship between *weil* and *denn* would then be very similar to that between 'because' and 'for' in English, both syntactically and semantically.

The same argument could be extended to the relationship between *weil* and *da* (which is equivalent to the English 'since, as'). It is generally considered (see, for example, Gaumann 1983: 43; Eisenberg 1989: 20) that there is a semantic difference between these two forms: *weil* normally implies that what follows is new information or a specific explanation of the content of the main clause, which is probably why *weil*-clauses normally follow the main clause; *da* normally implies a given, previously known or generally valid proposition, implying that the content of the main clause is inevitable or necessarily true. However, *da* (like *denn*) is rare in speech and is apparently never used with the verb-second pattern. It could be, therefore, that in spoken contexts *weil* with verb-second preceding the main clause is semantically equivalent to *da* in written contexts. Schlobinski (1992: 315) indeed argues that *weil* is the causal connective in spoken German (for a detailed discussion of the relationship between *weil*, *denn* and *da*, see Redder 1990 and Thim-Mabrey 1982).

The increased frequency of the verb-second pattern after a pause and its frequent occurrence in the other contexts established here (answer to why? question and turn-taking signal) lend further weight to the claim that *weil* may have different functions. In each of these environments, the *weil*-clause seems to 'break free' from an associated main clause, in other words to lose its sense of dependency and become a free-standing entity. Indeed, Günthner (1993: 43-6) argues that in terms of discourse pragmatics the verb-second pattern has the function of indicating precisely that there is no necessary dependency relation between the (propositions in the) main clause and the *weil*-clause: they are said to have 'separate assertability'. At the same time, it is important to realise that our study shows that the verb-second pattern is by no means confined to such 'independent' contexts, as is often argued.

It may also be that *weil* carries other potential discourse functions. For example, as well as signalling the intention to take over a turn in conversation, it can be used by the speaker already holding the floor to acknowledge that a turn-change could take place but at the same time to indicate a desire to retain the floor (Gaumann 1983: 117). It can also be used to comment on or explain the illocutionary force of a preceding clause, as opposed to explaining its content (Günthner 1993: 40ff):

3 Sind das Ölfarben? Weil: die haben manchmal so 'ne unheimliche Transparenz.
[Are those oil colours? Because: they're sometimes so incredibly translucent.]
(from Gaumann 1983: 111)

4 Und was gibts außer Cinema Paradiso? Weil – den hab ich schon gesehen.
[And what else is on apart from Cinema Paradiso? Because – I've seen that already.]
(from Günthner 1993: 41)

In fact, it may be that the verb-second pattern is virtually obligatory in such contexts. Furthermore, where the *weil*-clause has the function of providing the basis for reaching a conclusion expressed in the main clause (as in: You've been eating sweets again. Because - you've got chocolate all over your face), the verb-second pattern may not be obligatory but it entails a semantic difference from the 'same' sentence with the verb-final pattern in the *weil*-clause. Consider, for example, these sentences from Günthner (1993: 43):

5a Der hat sicher wieder gsoffen. Weil – sie läuft total deprimiert durch die Gegend.
[He's obviously been drinking again. Because – she's moping around totally depressed.]

5b Der hat sicher wieder gsoffen, weil sie total deprimiert durch die Gegend läuft.
[He's obviously been drinking again because she's moping around totally depressed.]

In 5a, the *weil*-clause contains an observation by the speaker on the basis of which she has reached the conclusion expressed in the first clause; in 5b, the *weil*-clause offers an explanation for the state of affairs articulated in the first clause.

Explanations such as these suggest that in addition to being a logical operator and a syntactic marker of subordination or coordination, *weil* can be used with verb-second word order as a kind of metalinguistic signal, a more or less conscious strategic device, and therefore (as Gaumann 1983: 115, 130 argues) a part of communicative competence (see also Sandig 1973: 38). These pragmatic explanations could be specific to *weil* and a small number of other conjunctions, in which case they would be interesting but not necessarily of any consequence in terms of the structure of the language as a whole. However, as we pointed out in the Introduction, this is not an isolated phenomenon and the tendency towards 'linearity' suggests that functional explanations are only part of the picture: economy of effort in both production and processing must also have a part to play in this development.

Therefore, while the balance of the evidence curently seems to favour the 'variation rather than change' hypothesis as far as *weil*-clauses are concerned, this study has given rise to a number of questions that should be the subject of further investigation. For example:

- Is this variable pattern going anywhere? In other words, will the variability persist or will the non-standard pattern eventually supplant the currently standard pattern?

- More specifically, will the pragmatic versatility enabled by formal distinctions mean that the variability will be retained, or will the pressure to simplify communication outweigh such stylistic considerations?

- If change is indeed in progress, how will it proceed? Will it, for instance, spread from one text-type to another (e.g. from informal, spontaneous speech to informal writing to formal speech and then to formal writing)? It is already widely observed in certain written contexts which commonly follow the norms of colloquial speech in other respects, such as advertising slogans and some journalistic contexts.

- If *weil*-clauses are changing their structure, will other clause types simultaneously follow the same route? Some are already doing so (especially *obwohl*-clauses [although] and *während*-clauses [while]) but apparently to a lesser extent.

The investigation of questions such as these not only represents a significant undertaking in the analysis and description of contemporary German but also has broader implications, especially for the teaching German as a foreign language. For even the limited studies that have been conducted to date show, for example, that the conventional distinction between co-ordinating and subordinating conjunctions is of doubtful value and that focusing exclusively on syntactic aspects of sentence patterns and ignoring semantic and pragmatic factors gives learners an incomplete and possibly erroneous picture of how the German language operates.

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Notes

1. Günther (1993: 53-4) takes this a step further by arguing for a view of the relationship between subordination and co-ordination as a continuum rather than a dichotomy. This relativistic position then enables her to adduce reasons for locating the verb-second pattern in *weil*-clauses 'nearer the co-ordinating end of the continuum'.

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EURODISNEY, FRENCH POLITICS AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

Bill Brooks

Early in 1994 it was announced that Eurodisney was not going to close, and that a financial restructuring, as it is called these days, had been worked out between the parent company Walt Disney Inc ("World Company" as Les Guignols de l'info have baptised it), Eurodisney SCA, its affiliate, and the shareholders. The financial package was being put to the banks and it seems highly unlikely that they will not back it - financial and political force majeure. Thus the highly publicised and heavily marketed invasion of Europe by Walt's World, which only opened for business in 1992, is likely to continue, rescued from financial disaster by a consortium of banks, most of them European, and the majority French, who have too much to lose.

Eurodisney announced debts in November 1993 in excess of 5 billion francs. If this were the USA and not Europe/France, and North American business realism were applied to Eurodisney, the solutions to the problem would be brutally clear: "on ne garde pas un business qui perd"[1]

However this is not the USA but Europe, where the business/financial/political culture is different, and a set of fairy godmothers have been found at this eleventh hour to transform the pumpkin into a shining coach and four. Even big Walt has had to bow to European pressure, and agreed to waive his share of profits and royalties, for the time being at least. So we can all make tracks for the Big Thunder Mountain for our holidays, although it is by no means clear that disaster has been averted.

Last year Eurodisney had operating profits of 650,000,000 FF with debt repayments of 1.7 billion. On the face of it this is hardly the kind of company that a rather fragile European banking system ought to be investing in, and if Eurodisney fails the banks' guarantees are fairly slender. In addition Eurodisney SCA has to pay considerable sums of money to the parent company (another billion) in royalties for ideas and designs for the second park on which

[1] L'Expansion, 20 January, 1994, p.46.

work was supposed to begin in 1994, but which may not now start. Walt Disney Inc. does not have much room for manoeuvre either, since some of its debts (20 billion FF) are spread over a consortium of banks that Disney cannot very easily control:

BNP:	750 million
Crédit agricole:	200 million
Indosuez:	350 million
Crédit foncier:	350 million
Crédit national:	750 million
Long Term Credit Bank of Japan:	400 million
Bayerische Vereinsbank:	300 million
Crédit Suisse:	300 million
Deutsche Bank:	300 million
Dresdener Bank:	230 million
Barclays:	300 million
Citibank:	130 million

The new French manager Phillipe Bourgignon (renamed Monsieur Bouffe by Les Guignols) has been trying to hang in by his fingernails. Walt Disney owns 49% of Eurodisney, and could in theory sell out at a profit, with shares that they bought at 10 francs still trading at around 30 francs. It could be an attractive move since the parent company has not invested anywhere near as heavily as have the Europeans. The original project cost 4.2 billion FF, to which the Walt Disney Company itself only contributed 160 million. Walt Disney could then continue to claim their royalties from their other theme parks across the world. However, such a move would seem unlikely given what Walt Disney still consider the potential of the European market, and that they would not wish to damage their reputation with the international banking fraternity, particularly when they are considering building more theme parks in Europe. It is interesting to note however that the Tokyo Disneyland has been handed over to the Asian banks. In Europe the fear would be that such a move would be a severe blow to those who promote popular capitalism, since the burden would fall on the 200,000 small investors who would be sacrificed.

What then has gone wrong? In theory France might have seemed the ideal springboard for this European development. 15 million Europeans live within a two-hour journey of Eurodisney. It is in France that Disney films like Aladdin

are most successful. The sale of Disney videos breaks all records in France, not to mention all the associated products sold in the Disney stores which opened last year in Paris and in other major regional centres. Successive governments from Fabius in December 1985 to Chirac in 1987 and Rocard in 1988 have backed the project, which after the Channel Tunnel was the second largest major development in France. Nevertheless the number of visitors to Eurodisney is not high enough (only 8 million in 1993), and only 30% of those visitors are French. French Governments of either complexion are embarrassed by the consequences of Eurodisney's failure. The 12,000 jobs that Eurodisney was supposed to provide have had to be revised radically downward. There have been strikes at "Disney -no man's land". The nearby motorway, the A4, has been invaded by angry workers, the CFDT leader has had meetings with Balladur, and there is talk of concerted industrial action worldwide in the Eurodisney theme parks - hardly the magical world that was promised.

There is no doubt that successive French governments, regardless of ideology, have backed Eurodisney to the hilt, as summarised by Claude Villain, government adviser to the Eurodisney project: "On a donné ce qu'on aurait mis dans l'implantation d'une grande usine Michelin."[2]

This is the way the French have traditionally done business, public and private sector working together. In the case of Eurodisney the government may have gone further than it would have done for Michelin. Did they not build an extra 11 kilometres of track for the RER, and provide a station, with plans for a second when the second park is built? Did they not also provide a station on the TGV line which skirts the edge of the park? Have they not built a spur to the A4 motorway to service Eurodisney?

The total cost to the French taxpayer is estimated at 3 billion FF, which Claude Villain claims has already been recouped through VAT on tickets and concessions within the park itself. What use will such an infrastructure be if the park closes? Admittedly it was a huge project, and at a time of economic difficulty and rising unemployment any government would have been sorely tempted by a scheme that envisaged a development of some 2000 hectares by 2017, an area about 1/5 the size of Paris. So far only 600 hectares have been developed, and there is no guarantee at all that the rest will be developed. In

[2] L'Expansion, 20 January, p.49.

terms of employment too the park was and potentially is a major source of jobs. It is estimated that some 40,000 extra jobs have been created indirectly as a result of the park in the Marne la Vallée area, and that Eurodisney has improved the order books of some 136 local companies that supply it. At the outset Eurodisney itself employed 12,000 people of 30 different nationalities. That number has now been reduced to 9,000, only 6,000 of whom have reasonably permanent contracts. The latest employment plan calls for a further reduction of 950 permanent staff, and 450 have already taken voluntary redundancy.

It has not just been the French government that has backed Eurodisney. Major firms have used Eurodisney as a major plank in their marketing strategy - Renault, IBM, France Télécom, and Nestlé, amongst others. It is argued that Nestlé has obtained a foothold in the American market on the basis of its Eurodisney marketing strategy. The head of Public Relations at Renault recently claimed that Walt's World is the ideal image for the two main groups targeted as potential buyers of their cars - the family and the European consumer - the image is "parfaitement en adéquation avec nos voitures à vivre". At Esso it's the same message:

> Nous ne sommes pas venus sur le parc pour vendre quelques milliers de litres d'essence supplémentaire, mais pour accentuer la proximité entre notre marque et les consommateurs européens.[3]

Even given the current difficulties the head of the Disney sponsoring operation at Nestlé still asserts:

> Il faut bien faire comme le public la distinction entre les difficultés de la société Eurodisney et le produit Eurodisney, l'image 'monde magique' est préservée, c'est ce qui nous importe.[4]

There can be little doubt that in certain key centres of French political and economic life the hopes and expectations of Eurodisney were very high indeed. With some 70,000 square metres of office space, and 10,000 square metres of accommodation, it was believed that the relatively slow development of Marne la Vallée and the whole of the commuter region to the east of Paris would be greatly improved. The second park was supposed to be dedicated to the cinema

[3] Régis Mallet, Joint Managing Director, Esso (France).
[4] L'Expansion, 20 January, 1994, p.50.

industry, recording studios, a conference centre, as well as the central office complex for Disney's wider operation in Europe. The third phase of the development would provide further office space and a commercial centre. All that looks a very long way off now, as Disney attempts to sell office space on the proposed second park without much success. It seems probable that the third phase will be abandoned completely. However, the French government is still committed to establishing a University dedicated to Management Science on the second site. In some ways this makes sense, particularly given the massive over-provision of hotel accommodation on the existing Eurodisney site. In the wake of the decision by the hotel chain Accor and the Club Méditerranée not to take over the hotel complex at Eurodisney, it is the Minister for Higher Education who has recently visited the hotel New York, with a view to turning it into residential accommodation for the staff who will teach on the Descartes campus. The Ministry of Education does not envisage using the slightly more "magical" Santa Fé and Cheyenne hotels, which could eventually be demolished, since if Eurodisney does fail the hotels will become white elephants. How will the sumptuous Disneyland hotel attract visitors to the somewhat bleak plains of eastern France under the icy drizzle of a north European winter when a room for four costs a minimum of 1600 francs per night? The middle-range hotel accommodation of the New York and the Newport Bay Club will make nice residential centres for the university, but is hardly likely to attract tourists when there is already overcapacity in two star hotels in Paris itself. It seems very likely that in building a hotel capacity equal to that of Cannes at Eurodisney, the planners underestimated the considerable attraction of Paris not so very far away. Orlando in Florida certainly cannot compete in the same way. We may yet see Eurodisney converted into a school or social housing unless prices are lowered and the tourists begin to arrive in larger numbers.

This would seem to be the key: either the visitors and tourists begin to arrive in the kinds of numbers originally envisaged (11 million per year) or Eurodisney could prove to be a very expensive failure. Will Europe not buy, will the French not buy the American dream? Leaving aside some of the mistakes the planners seem to have made about the climate of Northern Europe, as compared with Orlando or Los Angeles, and the reluctance of Europeans to travel the same kinds of distance for a day out as may happen in the USA, is the real problem cultural? The French point out that other theme parks like Astérix are

successful. Why, despite their best efforts, has Eurodisney not appealed to the French. I have to admit that I have not been there myself, despite many imprecations from my young children, but I am told that the huge Santa Fé hotel with its 1000 rooms is set in the hot idealised landscape of the American West. In the foreground is a giant head of Clint Eastwood, with a cheroot in his mouth, and he is scowling out towards Paris. I am also told that from the top of Sleeping Beauty's castle on a clear day you can see the Eiffel Tower. It is clear what the Disney planners were hoping to do - bring the nations of Europe together in a kind of universal magical world in which national identities would be dissolved into what it is believed all Europeans actually feel happy with, namely the United States as it appears in the movies. They probably also knew that the idea of the "far west" has always had a strong following in France, particularly in the 20th century and even among intellectuals. Cowboy films have always had a following in France as elsewhere, and usually the worse they are the more the intellectual likes them. Christopher Hope refers to Euro Disney as one stage on from the spaghetti western: the "Garlic Western".[5]

Eurodisney is marketed throughout Europe as the land of dreams, but the fact that all the dreams had to be bought under the pressure of the heavy sell may have confirmed French prejudice about Anglo Saxon attitudes to business. The concept that money is everything may still not have been embraced totally in France. I suspect that dreams and profit margins eyed with religious intensity still cause uncertainty in a country which both admires and resents its American cousin. It was Theodore Zeldin who pointed out that France has maintained a very active intellectual resistance to the American way of life, though this did have many active French admirers, while it was the USA that has convinced France that it should abandon some of its protest and at least some of the values which, paradoxically, the Americans had admired more than any other nation. The fact that the French will go in huge numbers to see Walt Disney films at the cinema, buy videos and artefacts, suggests that while they have a more private admiration for the American imaginary world than they would perhaps like to admit they still find the highly drilled public organisation of the heavily sold entertainment industry unattractive: the private and the public and the question of taste. It may be that the constant harrying from those

[5] The Guardian, Weekend, 3 October 1992, p 6.

who wish to sell just one more dream on top of the last one in as short a space of time as possible is counterproductive, and may awaken memories of Duhamel, the most vituperative of anti-American Frenchmen who saw the USA as not having made a contribution to Western civilisation, but representing a deviance and a break from it.

Could it also be that the notion of a pilgrimage to Eurodisney to experience the American Dream, rather than dissolve the demons of nationalism, has in fact roused them? The National Front and the Communist Party unite in their rejection of this attack upon French cultural identity - the famous "Mickey go home" chanted outside the Bourse in Paris when the shares in Eurodisney were first offered, or the condemnation by the National Front of "les gouvernements successifs qui ont cédé aux mirages et favorisé la contamination des esprits par une sous-culture importée de l'étranger."[6]

Perhaps such sentiments strike a chord with many other French people who resent the brash market-related approach of all aspects of Walt's world. "America without the aggro"[7] may seem to some like a contradiction in terms. World Company with its Frontierland, Adventureland, Fantasyland, Discoveryland and Main Street USA, may in fact be more resented in Europe than in Florida or Japan. Christopher Hope compared Eurodisney to the Soviet Union under Stalin: "Surely there can be few places on the planet , since the demise of the Evil Empire, where people have queued for more time for smaller rewards."[8]

There may also be something disconcerting in the curious distinction between the old Disney cartoons and comics and the Disney theme parks. Again it is Christopher Hope who points out that Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck are animals pretending to be people. In the Disney parks real people pretend to be animals so that visitors can pose with a six-foot mouse.

In conclusion, perhaps one can say that Eurodisney brings to the fore a conflict within French and European culture, between the old and the new, between economic, social and cultural priorities, in an age where the service industries are growing at an unprecedented rate and where entertainment is a product

[6] L'Expansion, 20 January, 1994, p. 51.
[7] C. Hope, The Guardian, Weekend, October 1992, p.8.
[8] C. Hope, The Guardian, Weekend, p.8.

which has to be marketed and sold on a world-wide basis. If it works the rewards can be enormous, and clearly the European banks and the progressives are anxious not to be left behind:

> Qu'il s'agisse de Walt Disney, de Coca Cola, de McDonalds ou de Lévi Strauss certaines marques sont des éléments du patrimoine mondiale et la retraite d'Eurodisney équivaudrait pour l'Amérique comme une sorte de Vietnam du marketing.[9]

The alternative could be seen as Europe surrounding itself with its demons of retreat and protectionism:

> Chacune de nos nations possède sa culture, sa mentalité, son histoire. Chacune est un oeuf dur et les Américains avec leur universalisme sommaire ont cru pouvoir faire une omelette: erreur surtout à cette époque très anti-melting pot. Au fond ce qui se joue à Marne la Vallée se ramène à ceci: va-t-on vers une harmonisation des nations et des cultures ou vers un rejet des unes par les autres.[10]

However, this is an economic view; the world economy, upon which our jobs increasingly depend, requires cultural adaptation on the part of those that invade, and capacities for absorbing another culture for those who are invaded. I feel a bit like poor old Zadig in Voltaire's parody of Jeremiah about the possibility of happiness in the world. Confronted by powers which he cannot understand, but to which he is obliged to submit, all he can say is "mais". Perhaps the French by their refusal to embrace Eurodisney are saying "mais" as consumers, but is there an alternative and brighter future for the people of Marne la Vallée?

[9] Bernard Cathelat, Director of the CCA (Centre for Advanced Communication).
[10] G. Panayotis, Director of MKG, a marketing company for the tourist and hotel industry.

CENTRE FOR LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

The Centre was established in 1986/87 to bring together staff across the University in order to promote research and development work, teaching and other academic activities. It currently draws together over thirty staff from the Faculties of Arts, Social Sciences and Educational Studies. There are also about one hundred associate members from outside the University across Southern England, who can attend short courses and seminars organised by the Centre. "Language in Education" is interpreted broadly, and staff have expertise in applied linguistics, language learning and teaching (both mother tongue and foreign languages), drama, literature, media and television studies, sociolinguistics and multilingual/multicultural education.

If you would like to know more about the work of the Centre for Language in Education or if you would like to become an associate member, please contact any member of the Centre or:

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